

four issue mini-series



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CDC

FEATURING THE

Elementals

COMICO THE COMIC COMPANY





EDITORIAL

Well, Bill Willingham was going to write this issue's editorial, but due to his ever-pending ELEMENTALS schedule, the duty once again falls to ye old illustrator.

I've just mailed off JUSTICE MACHINE #4 for scripting by the versatile Mr. Willingham, and I must say we've got a real surprise or two for you. Who is Darkforce? How can the Justice Machine, even with the aid of the Elementals, defeat a zillion and one interdimensional demons? Well, I know, Bill knows, and Tarot knows, and we told Tarot we'd break his ears if he told anyone. So, you'll just have to wait to find out.

Now, as for the issue you hold in your hands—what do you think? Did the Justice Machine whup the Elementals' butts, or what? I mean, since Bill isn't looking over my shoulder as I write this and probably won't even see it until it's printed, I think this is a divine opportunity to cut loose here.

Originally, JM and Elementals were supposed to fight to a standstill, but while Bill's back was turned, I redrew the last half of the book and rewrote his script entirely! Lucky for Bill I didn't redesign the Elementals' costumes, but there are only so many hours in the day!

Actually, what you see *is* what Bill and I discussed and agreed upon. Mr. Willingham is one terrific writer and we both seem to think along the same creative lines. In fact, we have tentative plans for an annual JM/Elementals team-up. Let us know if you like the idea. If you do, demand that it become a reality. Form a committee! Create a movement! March upon the lawn of Comico's offices! Lobby! Lobby! Lobby! But don't forget to say *please*.

So, just who are these characters who call themselves the "Justice Machine"? What are their origins, and what is the extent and nature of their incredible powers?

Let's start with Challenger, the leader of JM. For a man in his early forties, he's got a lot on the ball, even if he *does* color his hair. His civilian identity is Jaime Conrad, though he prefers to be called Challenger. The Justice Machine and his service to the Georwellian government take precedence over his personal life. He's a veteran of the Georwellian Rim Wars, and despite the harsh life he's led and the horrors he's seen, Challenger is perhaps the most idealistic of the Machiners. He's an expert with nearly any firearm and has numerous gadgets and gizmos at his disposal, most of which he developed himself. He's good, he's fast, and he's a born leader.

Diviner. Her name is derived from the term "divining rod," referring, of course, to the forked stick that can allegedly locate underground water supplies. In her case, she is the Justice Machine's bloodhound. Her cape incorporates a sensory web which enhances her natural senses and enables her to track fugitives of the law.

Born Tessei Molleng, Diviner met Challenger before JM was ever formed. In fact, before the pressures of public service became overwhelming, they were married—but no longer. Rumor has it that her mean right cross is a byproduct of the last few months of her marriage.

Then there's Titan, otherwise known as Jemin Osk. He's 33 years old, a father of two, and on occasion, a real big dude: his growth powers range from 9 to 27 feet. If he grows any taller, he risks unconsciousness. Perhaps the most naïve of the group, Titan has been known to back down from a fight, despite his obvious superior size and strength. This might be a result of his constant fights with his (literally) bigger brother, Ivan.

Blazer is the youngest member of the group, who, like Titan, de-

veloped her latent abilities upon entering puberty. The Georwellian government immediately took charge of the world's first born pyrogenic, developed a body suit to control her flame, and enlisted her in the Justice Machine at the age of 17. Removing her costume could prove hazardous to your health!

And what of Demon, so-called fastest man on Georwell, master martial artist, and self-proclaimed lady-killer? His genetic hyper-speed and his apparent disregard for death quickly brought him to the side of Challenger in various suicide raids during the later days of the Rim Wars.

Certainly the most egotistical of the group, Demon (Gabel Nevin by name) is a professional and social climber. If the position were open, he'd push for leadership of the Justice Machine.

Of all the Machiners, Talisman is the most enigmatic. For all intents and purposes, his powers work on the concept of karma. You do good, you *get* good. You do bad, you get bad right back. Considering his generally obnoxious behavior, one would think he'd be in constant danger of being hit by a truck! The nature of his work and his association with the other Machiners helps account for his usually unbelievable luck.

Talisman isn't an easy man to get along with. At age forty, he's set in his ways and has no friends or family—after all, it's not easy to get to know someone whose given name is unknown, even to himself.

In a nutshell, these are the members of the Justice Machine. More details will develop in time.

So read on—the best is yet to come.

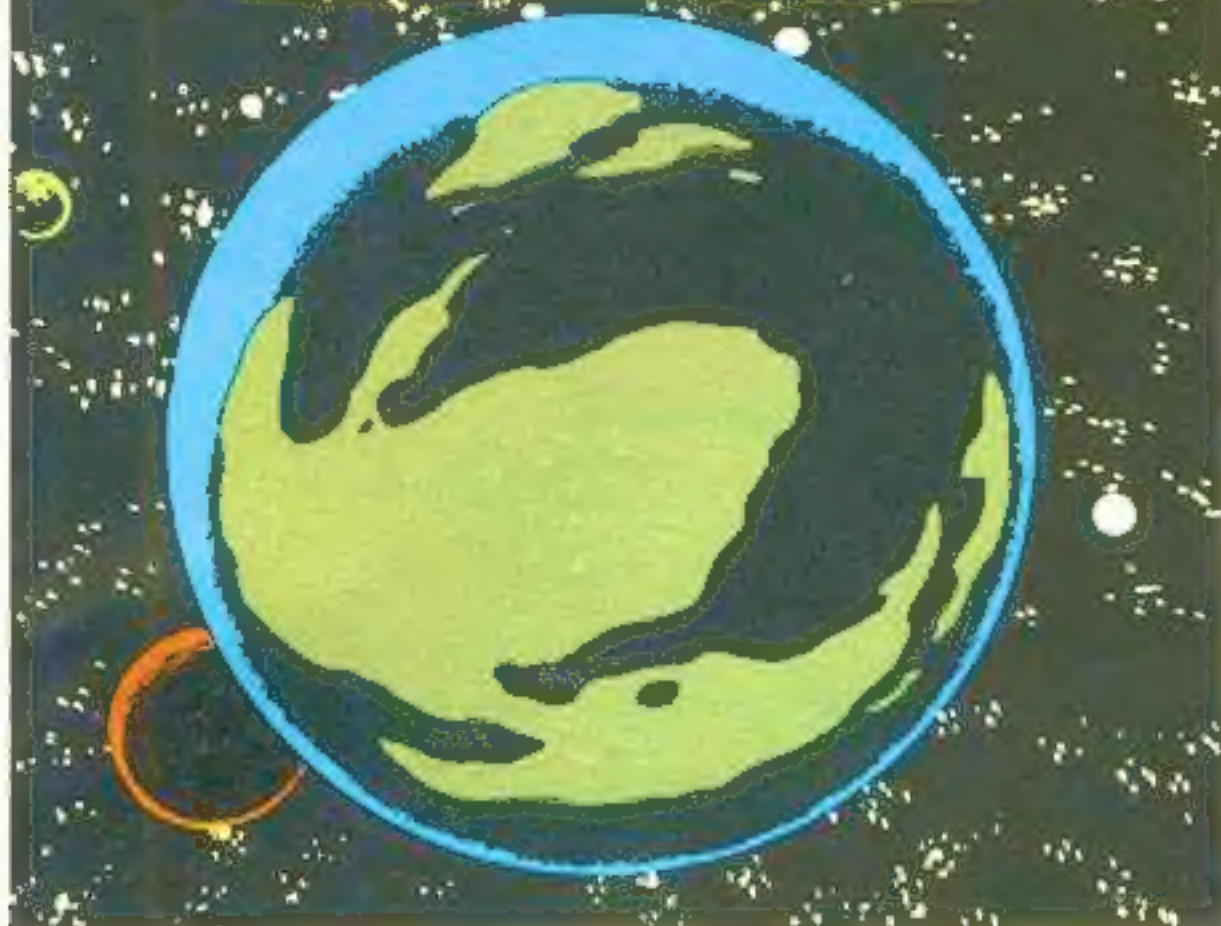
Next issue, Mike Gustovich probably writes again.

See ya then.

—Mike Gustovich

THIS IS NOT THE EARTH.

THIS IS THE PLANET GEORWELL--
A WORLD OF MEN IN ANOTHER
DIMENSION.

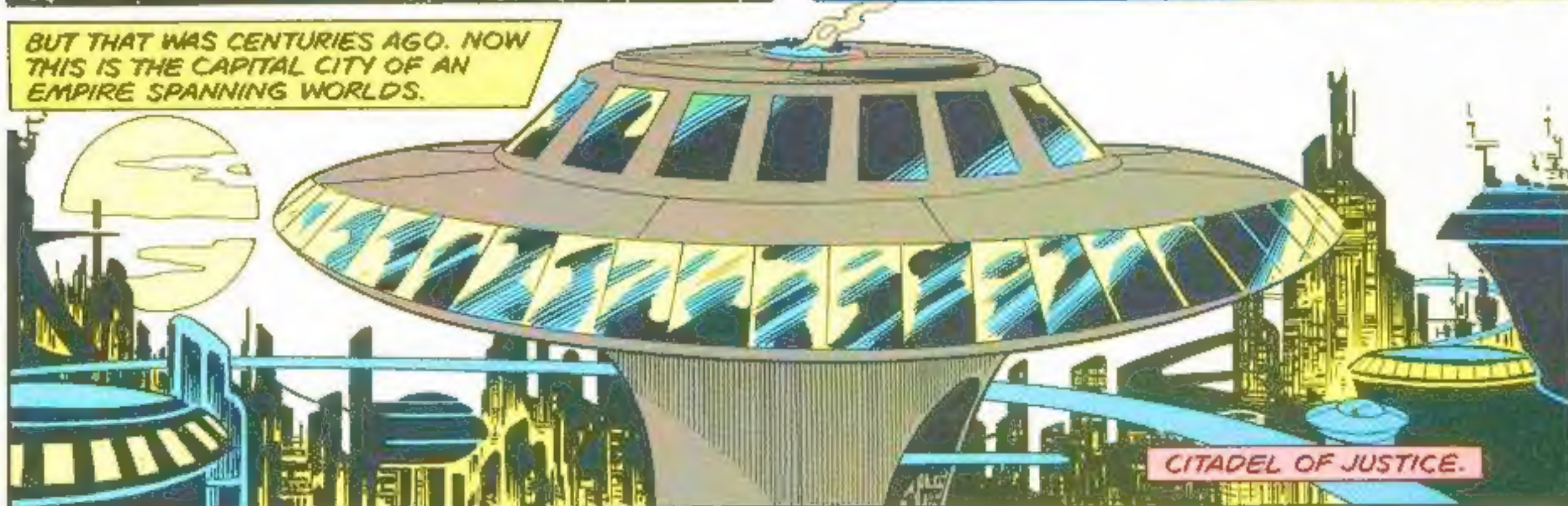


THIS IS NO CITY
YOU HAVE EVER
KNOWN.

THIS IS MARTEL, NAMED AFTER THE
MEDIEVAL KING, WHO, WITH A MERE
FOURTEEN MEN AT ARMS, HELD
THE LAND AGAINST FIVE
LONGSHIPS OF TULL
INVADERS, FOR
SIXTY DAYS.

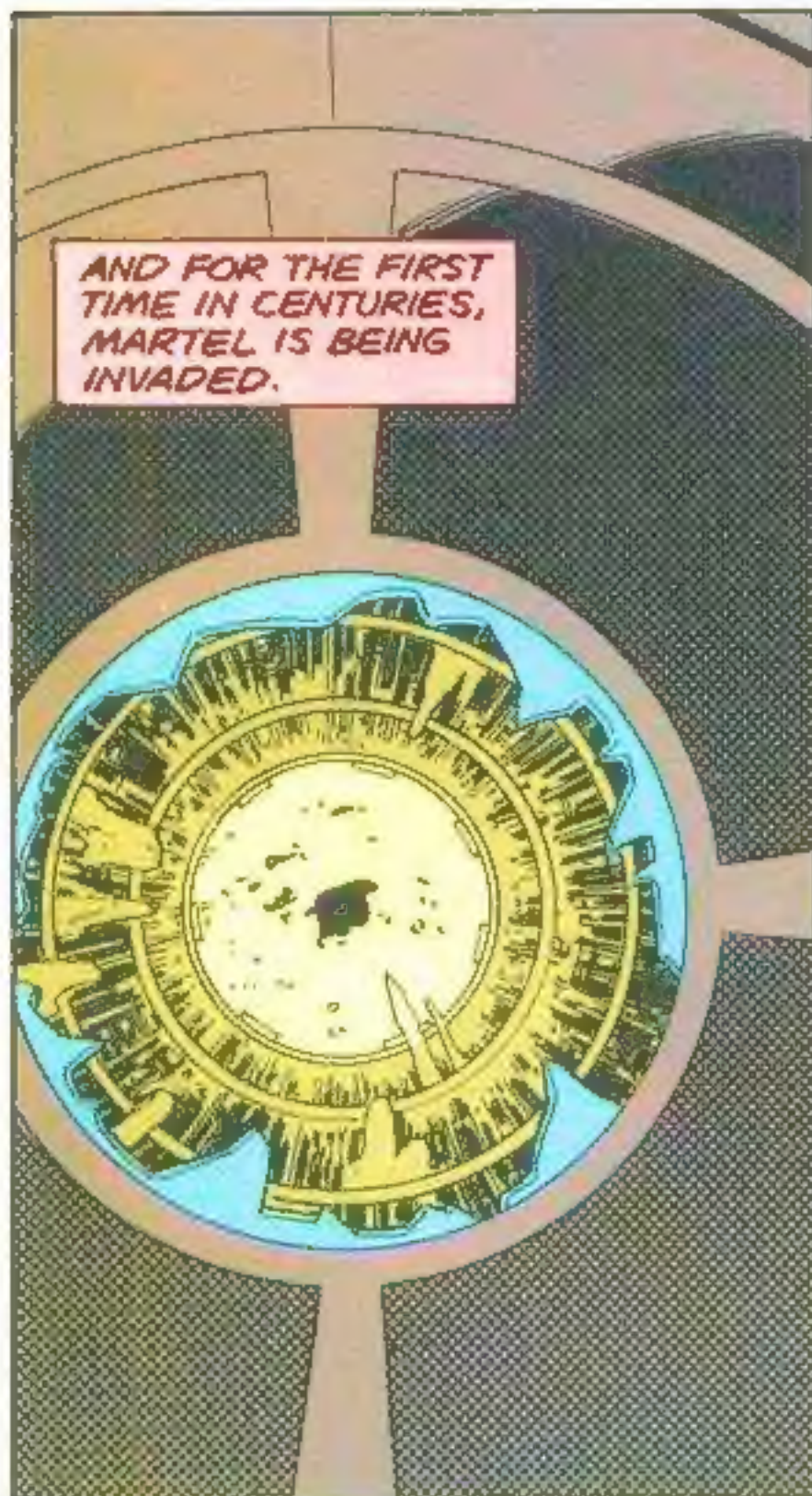


BUT THAT WAS CENTURIES AGO. NOW
THIS IS THE CAPITAL CITY OF AN
EMPIRE SPANNING WORLDS.



CITADEL OF JUSTICE.

AND FOR THE FIRST
TIME IN CENTURIES,
MARTEL IS BEING
INVADED.



THE INVADERS ARE FROM EARTH. THEY
ARE THE ELEMENTALS. THEY ARE HERE
TO RESCUE A FREEDOM FIGHTER
WHO IS BEING HELD PRISONER BY
A SUPER-POWERED GROUP OF
GOVERNMENT "SECRET POLICE"
KNOWN AS THE
JUSTICE MACHINE!

JUSTICE MACHINE

CHAPTER TWO: THE ELEMENTALS AFFAIR

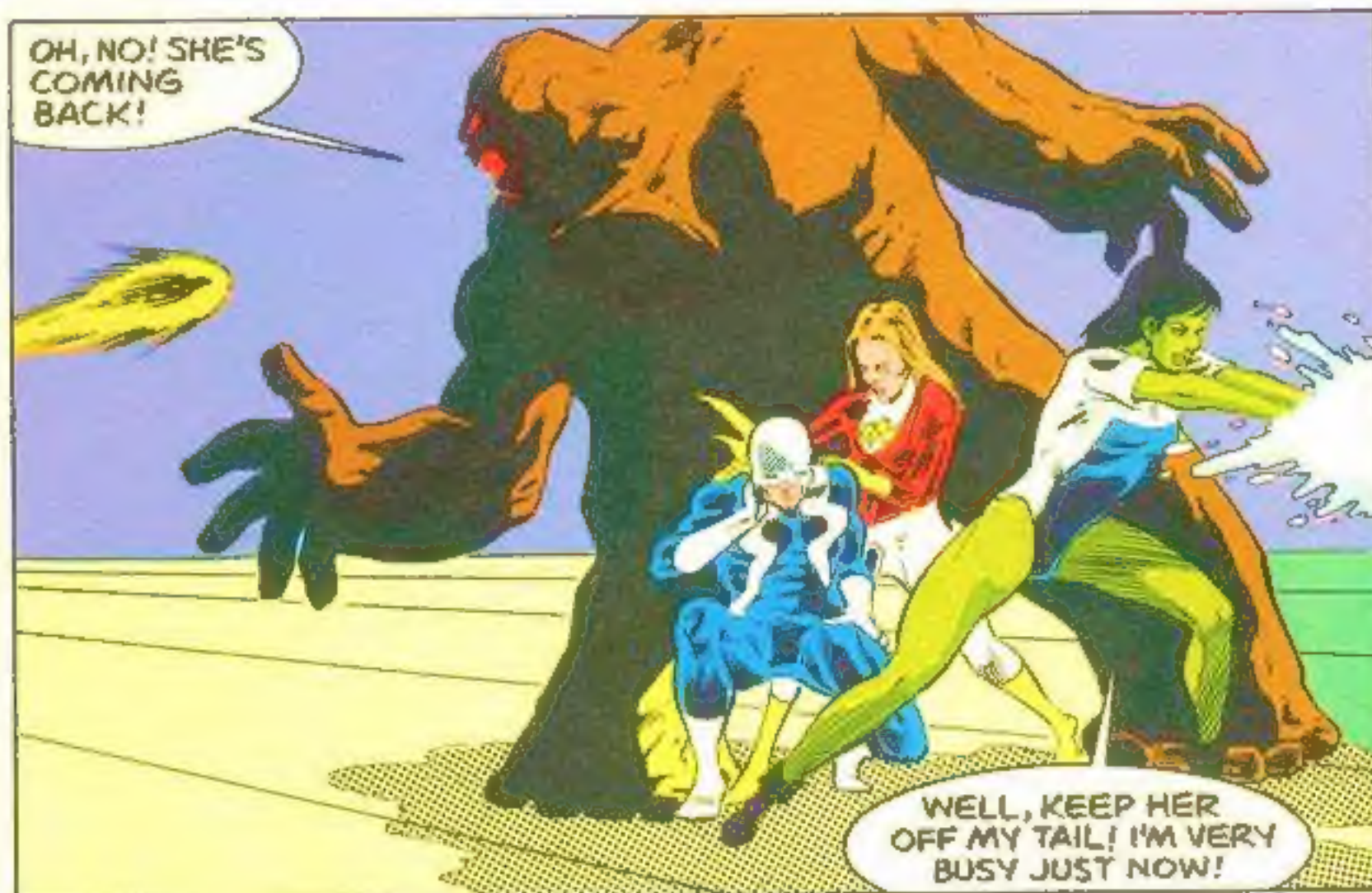


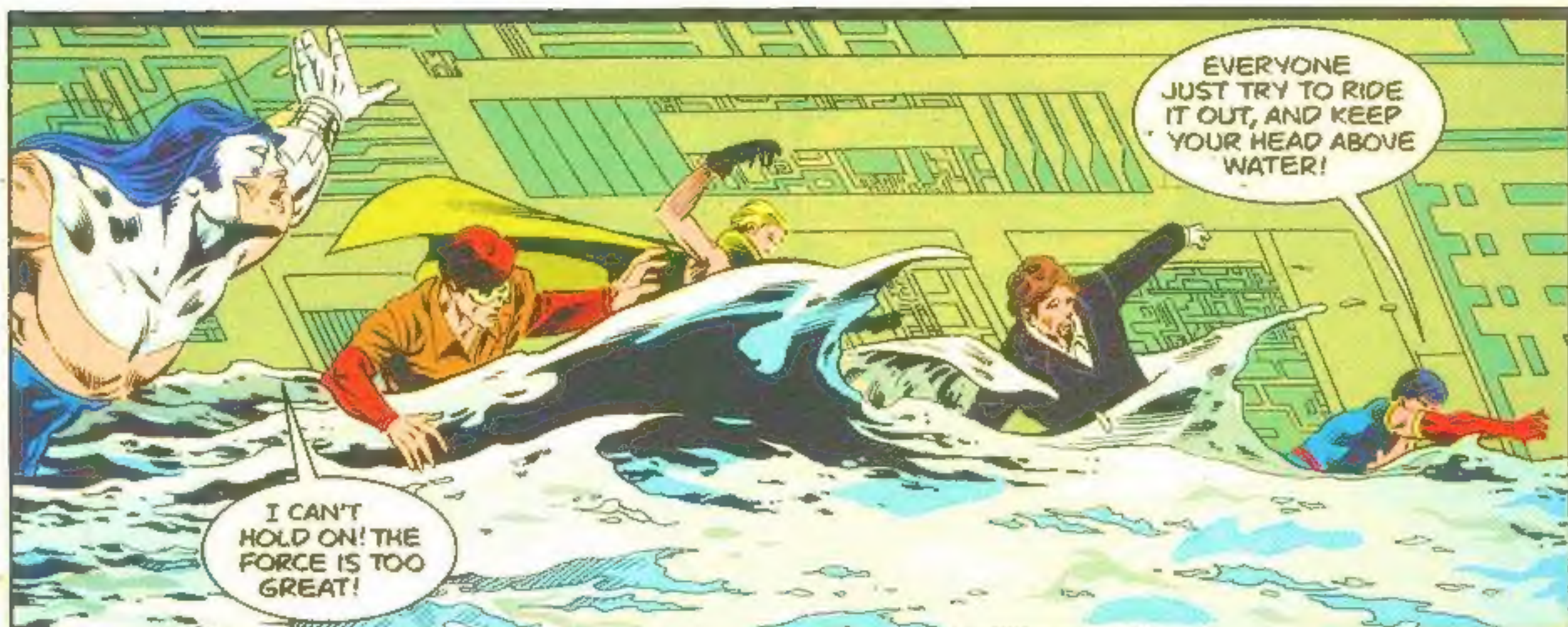
CREATED AND ILLUSTRATED BY
MIKE GUSTOVICH • WRITTEN BY
BILL WILLINGHAM

COLORS BY
TOM VINCENT • LETTERED BY
PINAHA • EDITED BY
DIANA SCHUTZ











WHO ARE THOSE PEOPLE?!

HOW CAN A SMALL GROUP FIGHT THEIR WAY INTO THE TOP SECURITY COMPLEX ON GEORWELL, DESTROY LARGE AREAS OF THE TOWER, AND FIGHT THE JUSTICE MACHINE OFF AS IF THEY WERE SCHOOL-CHILDREN?!

KEEP A MONITOR ON THEM, BUT FIND OUT WHERE THE JUSTICE MACHINE IS-- NOW!

RECORDS?

CHIEF PROSECUTOR
ZARREN

RECORDS SHOW NO IDENTIFICATION FOR ANY OF THE INTRUDERS, SIR! I AM BEGINNING TO CONDUCT A WIDER COMPUTER SEARCH FOR RECORDS ON THE OUTWORLDS. IT WILL TAKE AWHILE, BUT IF THEY ARE KNOWN ANYWHERE IN THE IMPERIUM, WE'LL FIND OUT.



THIS HAS
SOMETHING TO DO
WITH DARKFORCE!
I'M SURE OF
IT!

I WANT
HIM OUT OF
THIS DAMNED
ARMOR, NOW!

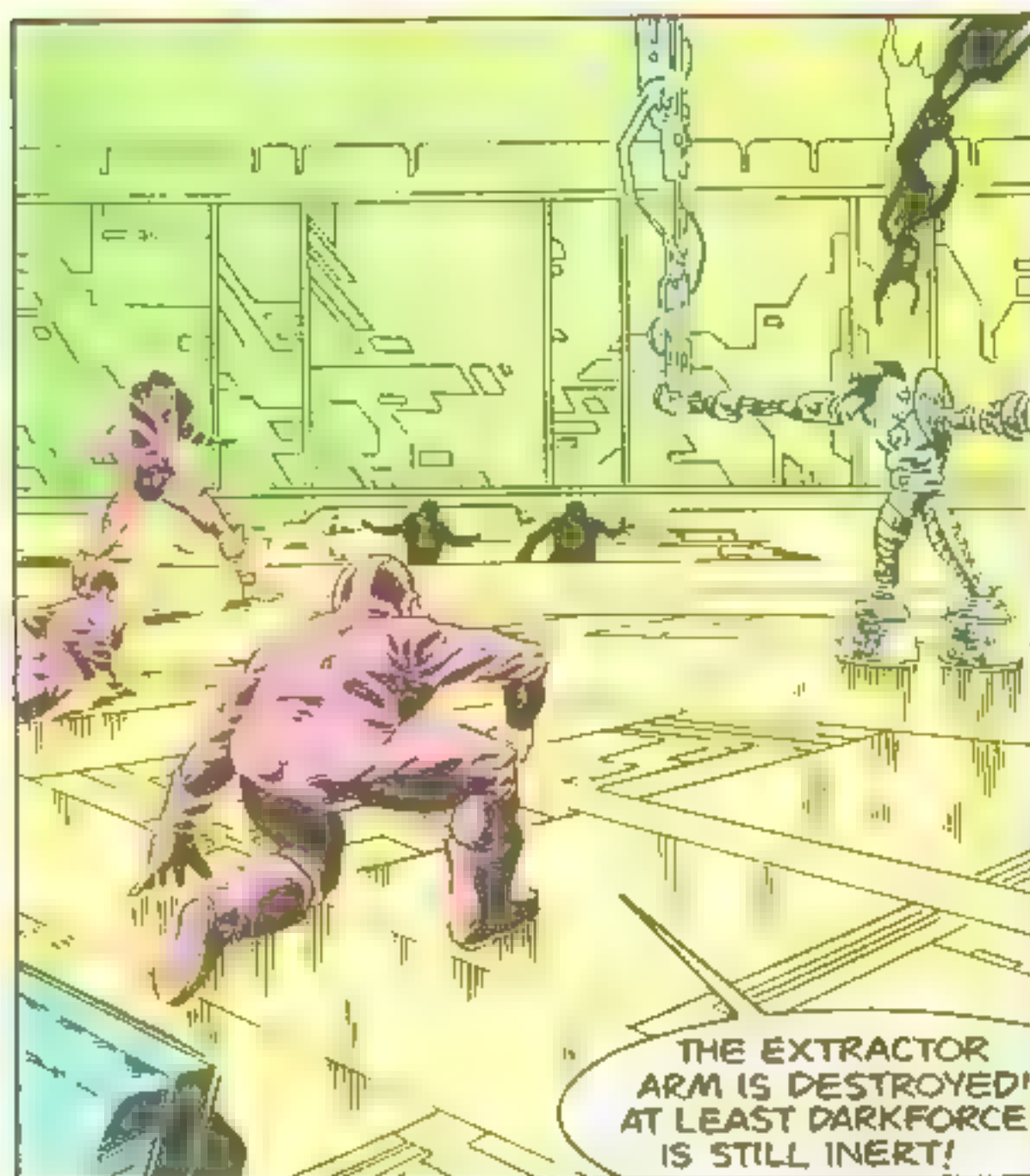


"EMPLOY THE
EXTRACTOR
ARM."



SSSKKRAAACCKK!!

AAAAARRGGH!

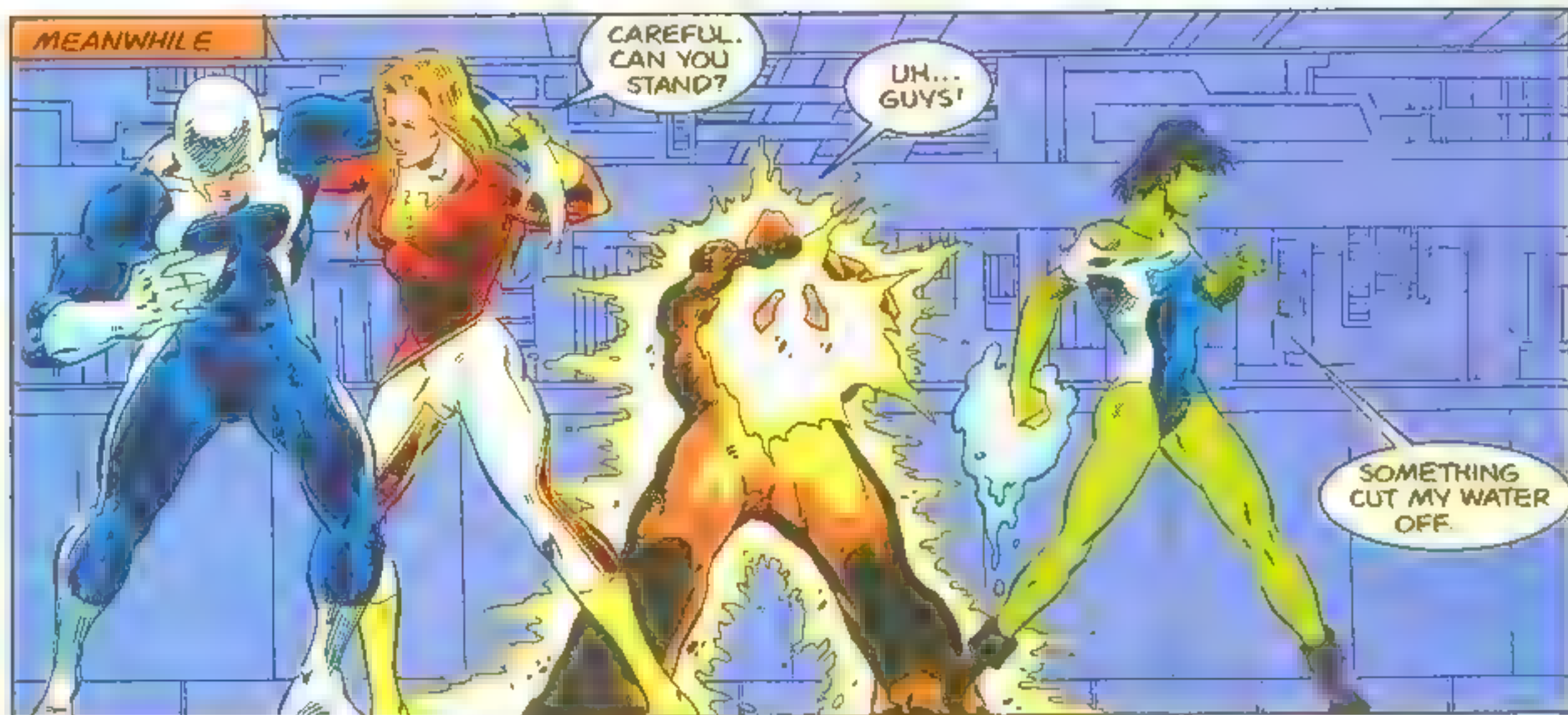


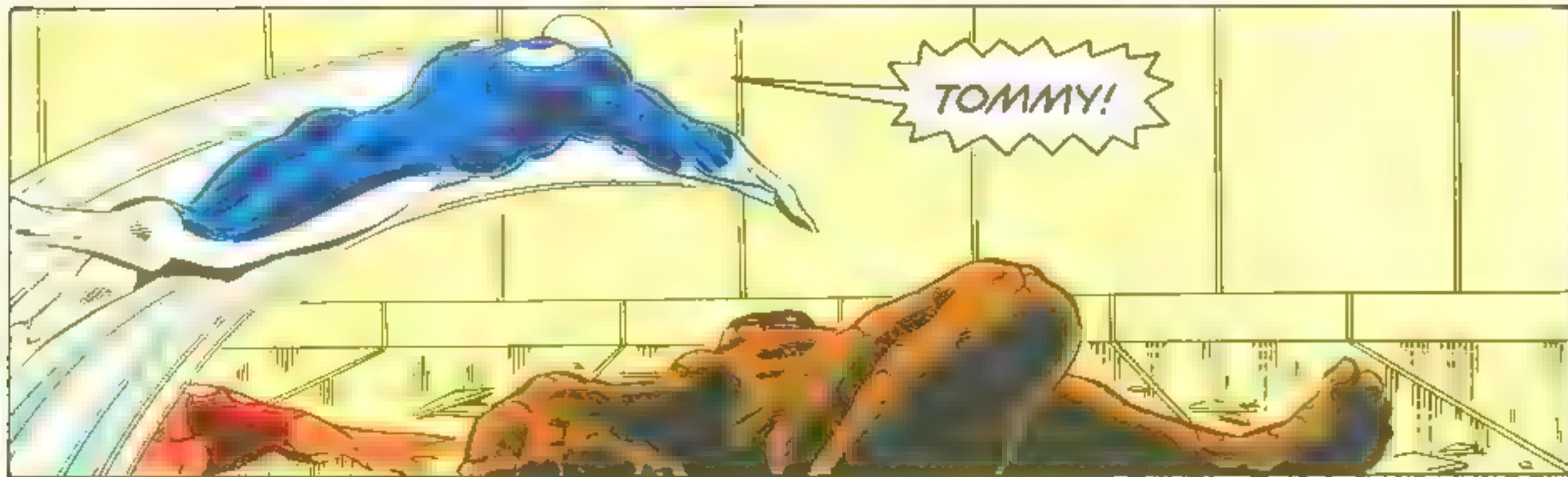
THE EXTRACTOR
ARM IS DESTROYED!
AT LEAST DARKFORCE
IS STILL INERT!



EVEN IN STASIS, DARKFORCE
IS DEADLY! BUT NO MATTER
HOW MANY DEFENSES HIS
ARMOR HAS, NO MATTER
HOW MANY OF HIS
TERRORISTS ATTEMPT
TO FREE HIM.

...THE
GREAT
PROTECTORATE
OF GEORWELL
WILL
PREVAIL!

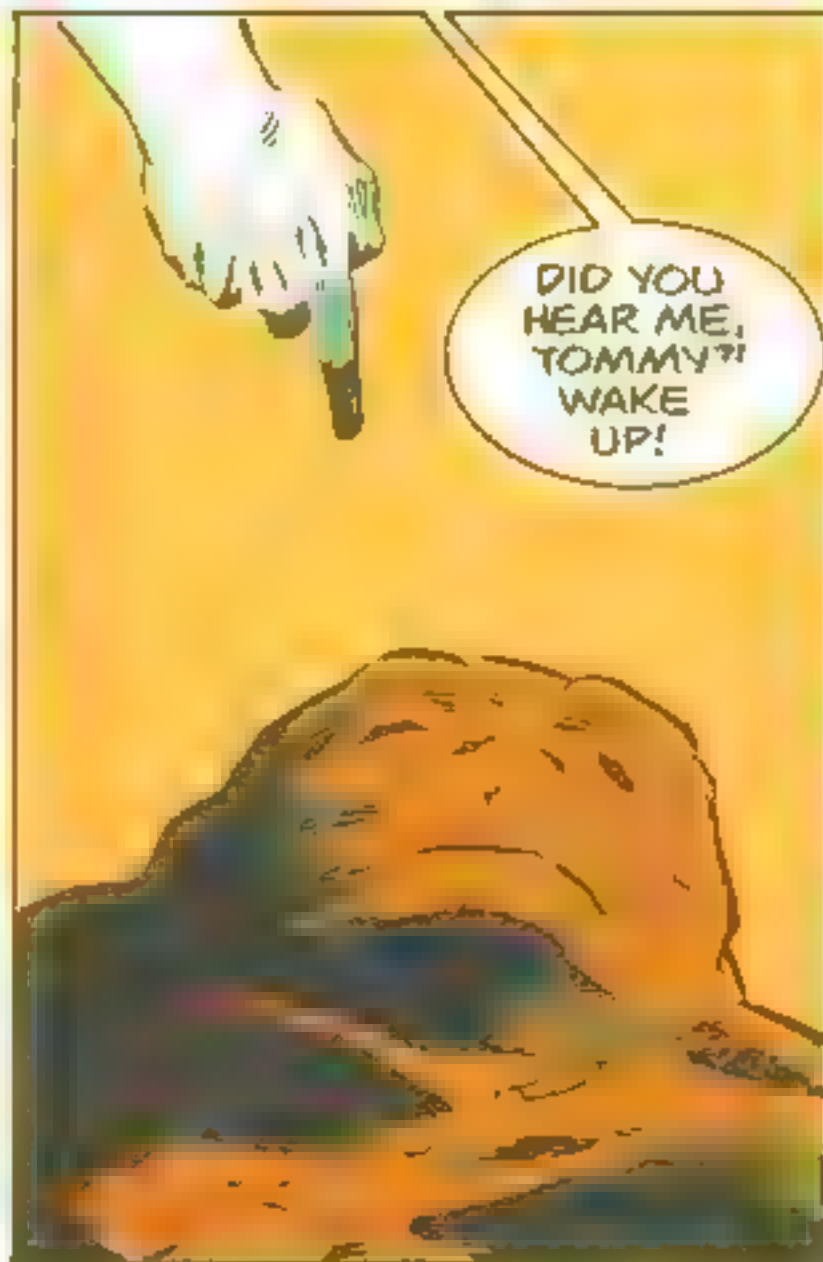




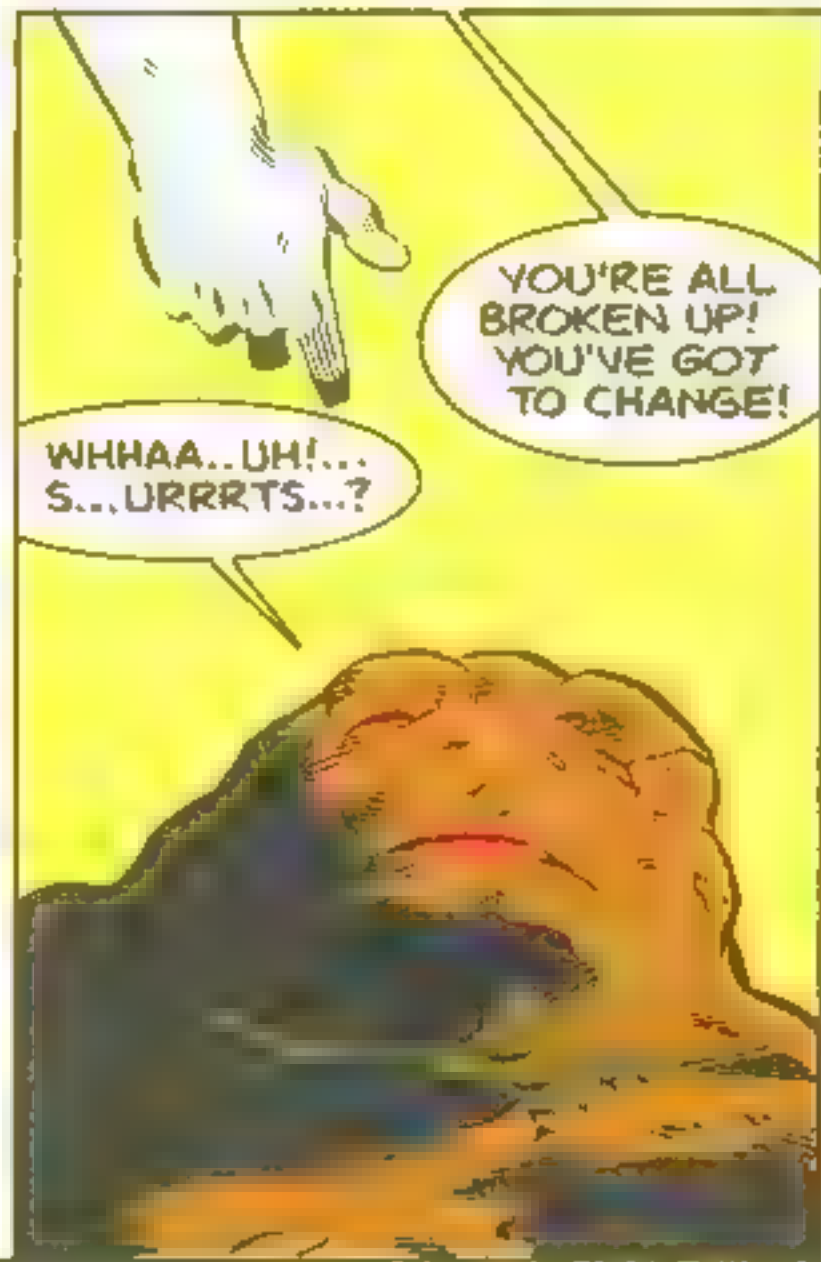
TOMMY!



**TOMMY!
WAKE UP!
YOU'VE GOT
TO CHANGE!**



**DID YOU
HEAR ME,
TOMMY?!
WAKE
UP!**



**WHHAA..UH!...
S...URRRTS...?**

**YOU'RE ALL
BROKEN UP!
YOU'VE GOT
TO CHANGE!**



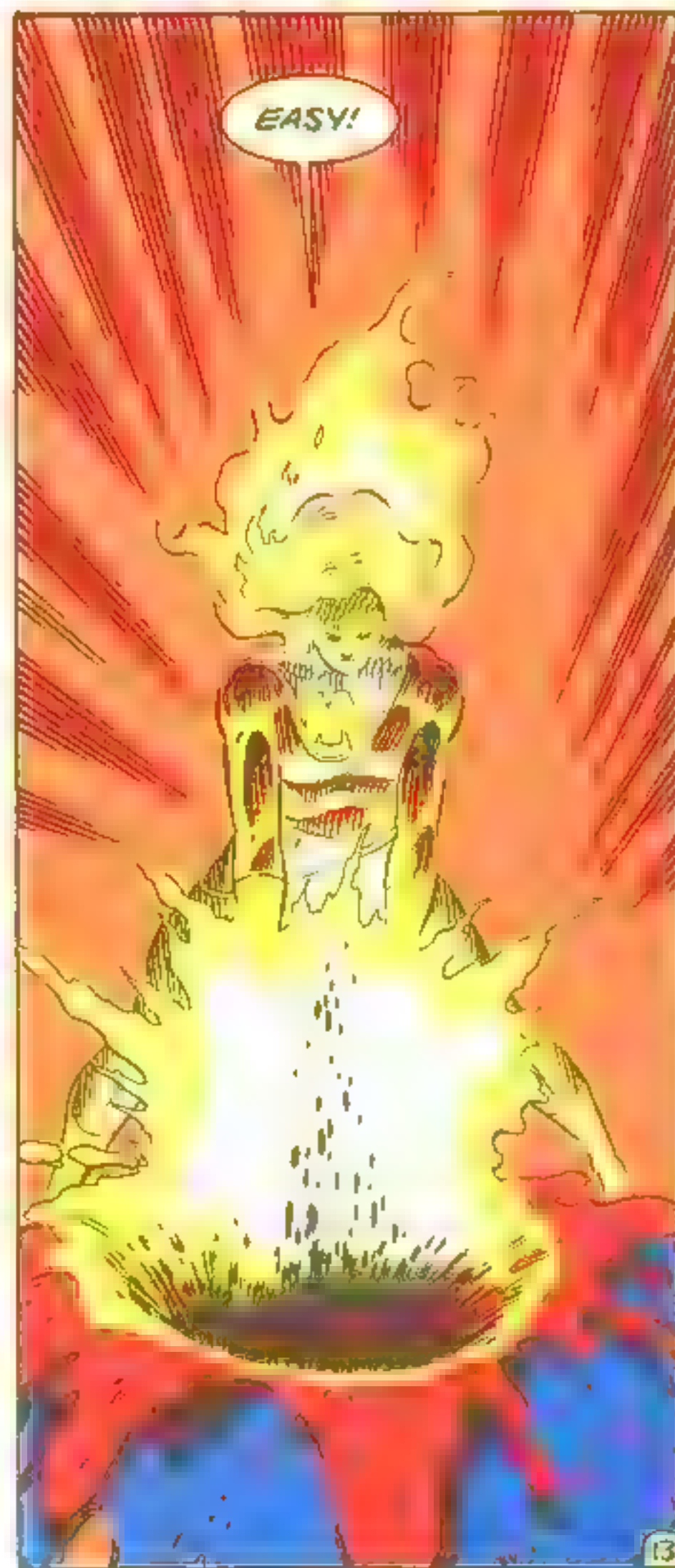
**LISTEN TO ME, DAMMIT!
YOU'RE ALMOST IN PIECES!
IF YOU DON'T CHANGE BACK
TO TOMMY RIGHT NOW,
YOU'RE GOING TO CRUMBLE
INTO LITTLE ROCKY
BITS!**

**SSSUH...?
CHNNGG...?**

**AND I'M NOT
GOING TO CLEAN UP
THE MESS, YOU LITTLE
BRAT! SO YOU JUST
CHANGE BACK
RIGHT NOW!**

TOMMY!

TOMMY?!



FAR REMOVED FROM GEORWELL, LOST IN THE UNCOUNTABLE STRATA OF DIMENSIONAL BARRIERS, IS EARTH. PRIMITIVE. HARDLY WORTH NOTICING BY ANYONE OF DISCRETION.



IT IS OF NO IMPORTANCE

EXCEPT...

THIS IS THE HOME OF THE ELEMENTALS

WELL, GENERAL, I GUESS YOU KNOW WHY I CALLED YOU HERE.

MY DAUGHTER HAS DISAPPEARED AGAIN, ALONG WITH THE OTHERS. THIS TIME THERE WERE NO DESTROYERS, NO SAKER, NO NOTHING! WHICH LEADS ME TO ONE INESCAPABLE CONCLUSION...

YOU'VE WANTED TO LOCK THEM UP FOR SOME TIME.

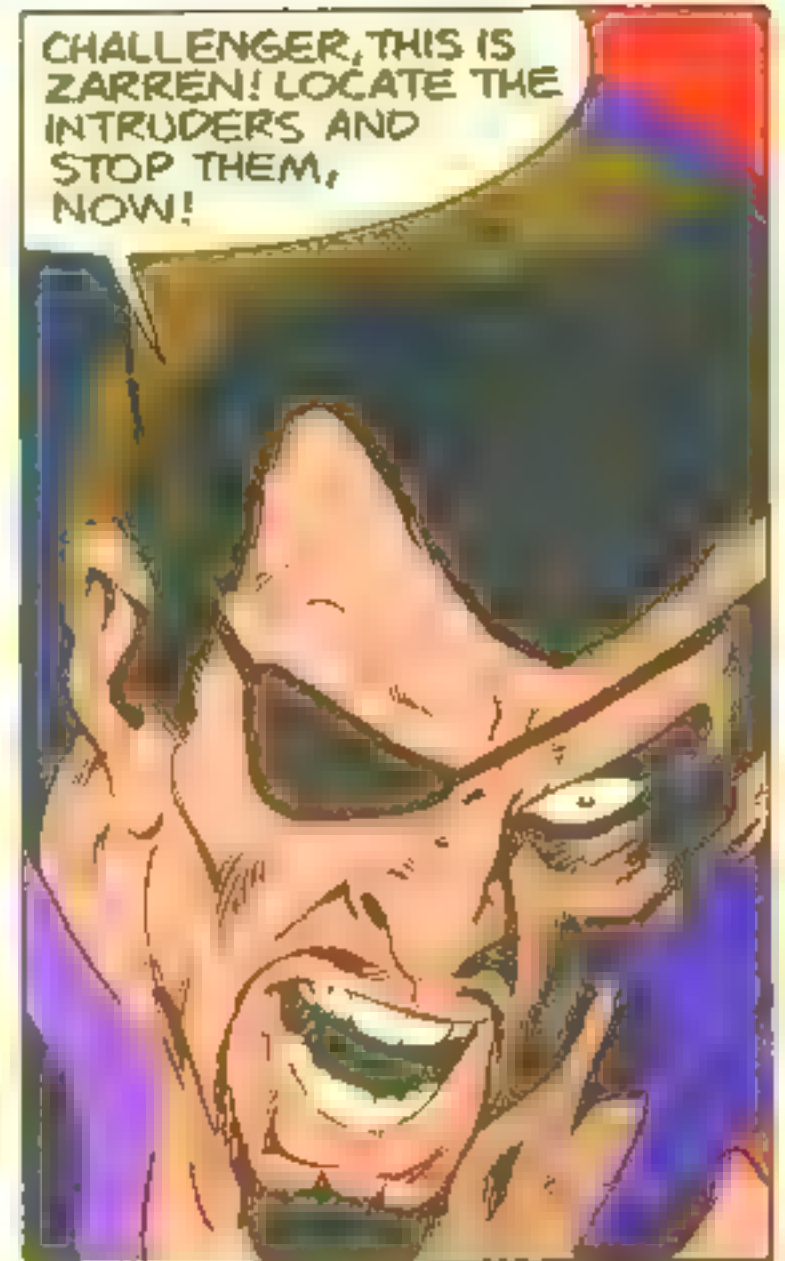
...YOU TOOK THEM!

MR. GOLDEN, I DID NOT TAKE YOUR DAUGHTER! I DID NOT TAKE ANY OF THEM!

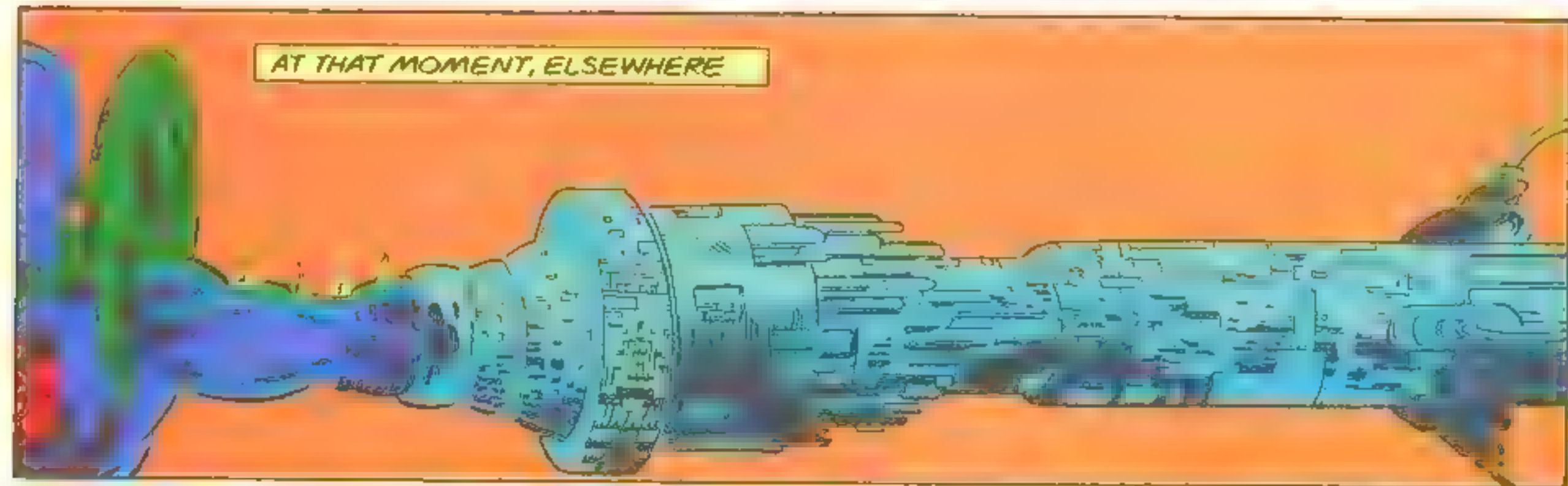
DAMN IT, MISTER, WHEN ARE YOU GOING TO REALIZE THAT I AM NOT OUT TO GET YOUR PEOPLE? I AM ONLY CONCERNED WITH PROTECTING AMERICAN CITIZENS FROM SUPER-HUMANS!

NOW LET'S START CONSIDERING WHERE THE ELEMENTALS MIGHT BE...

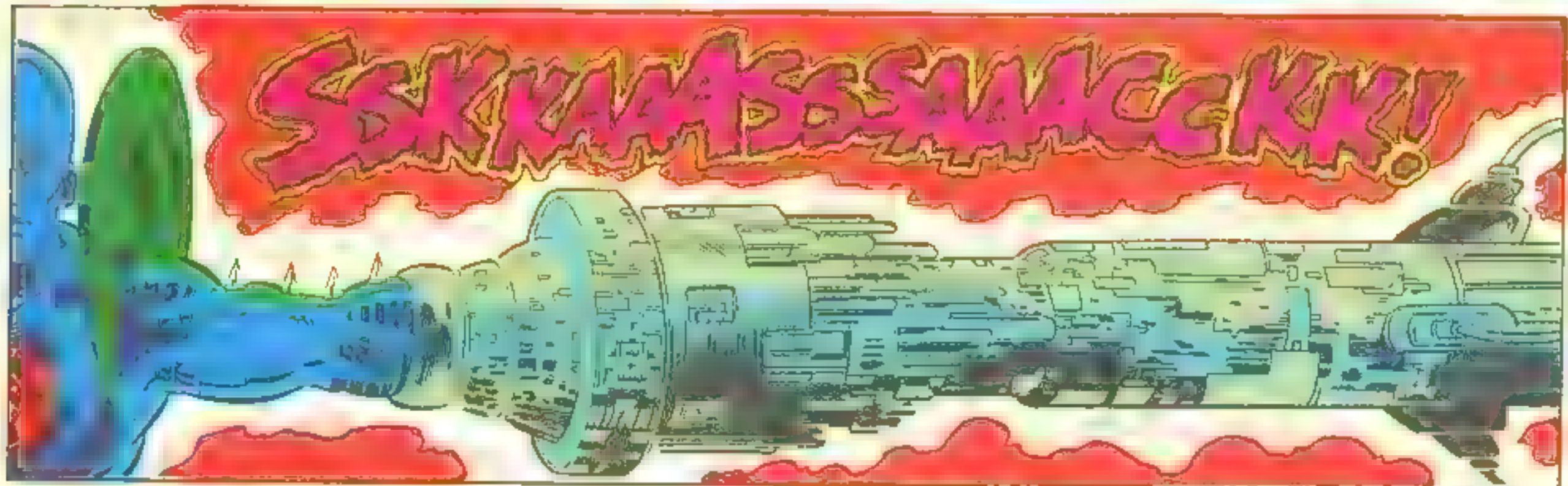




AT THAT MOMENT, ELSEWHERE

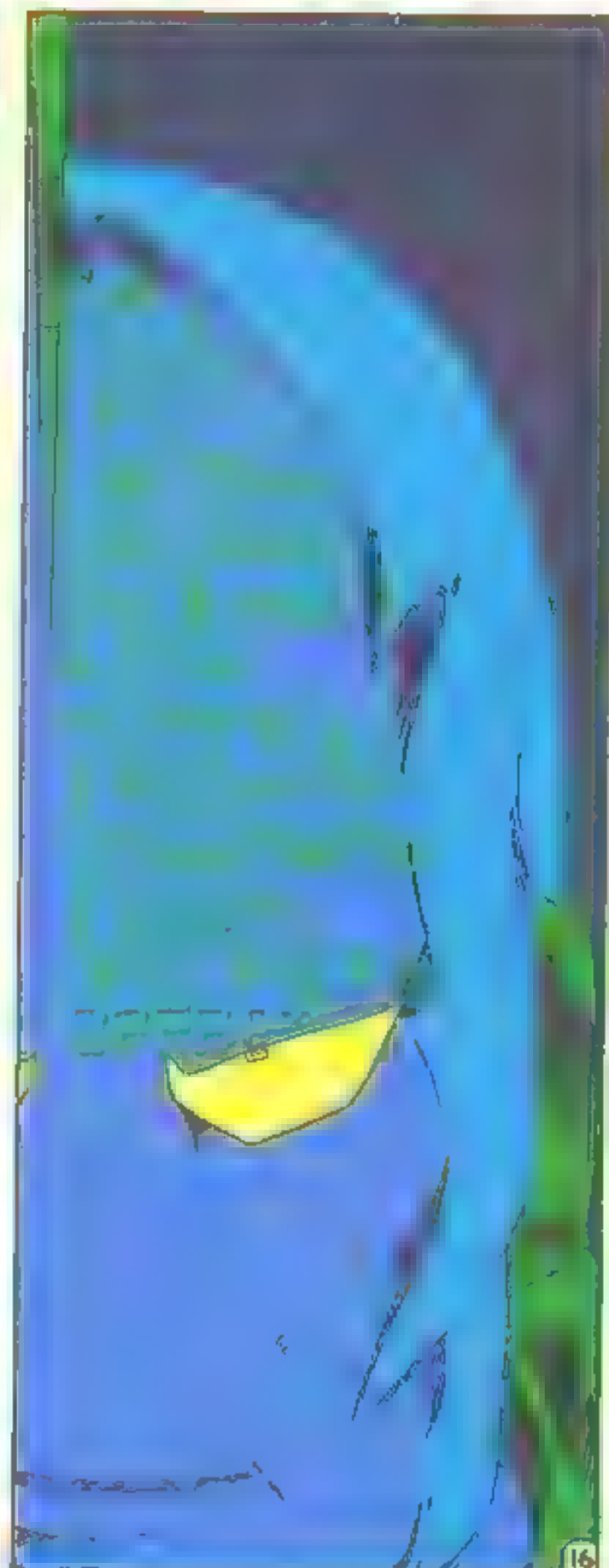


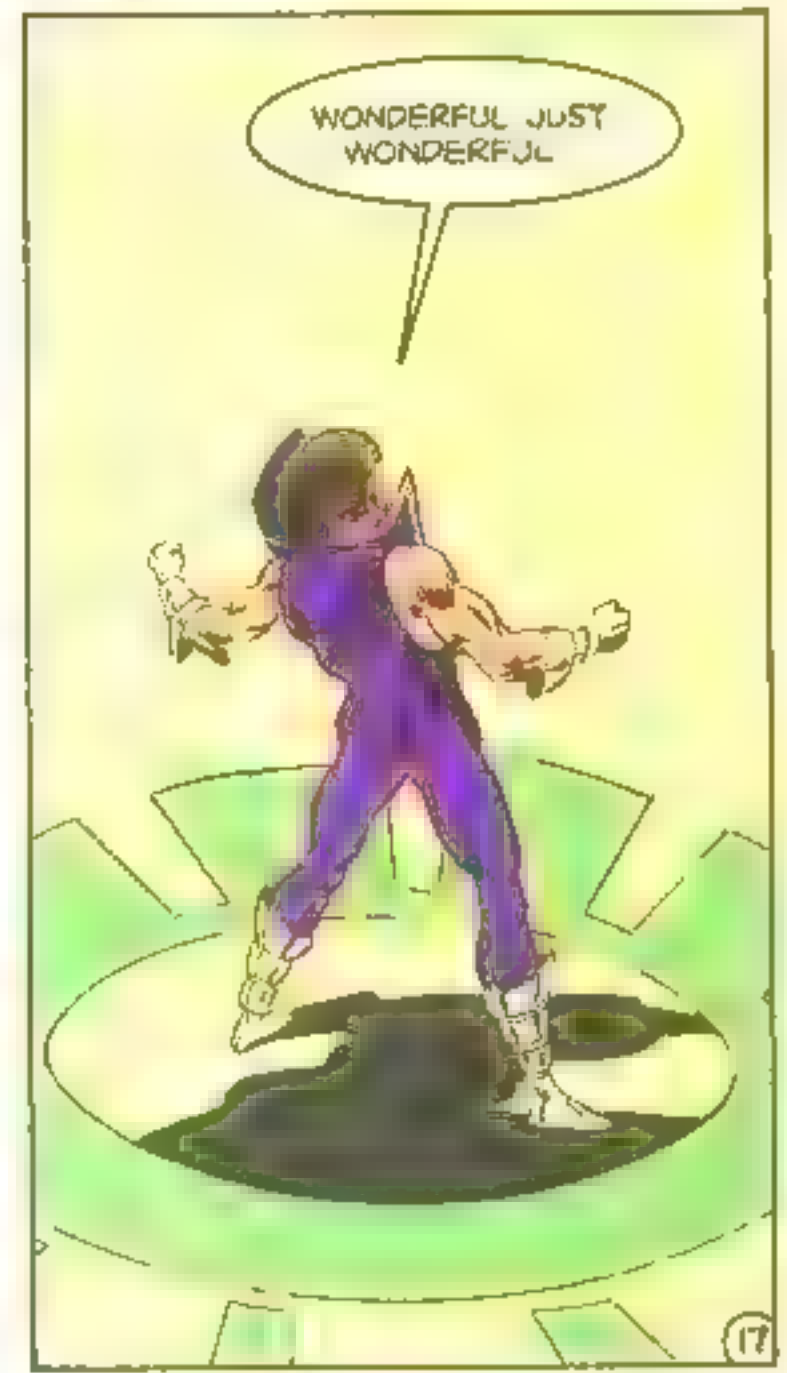
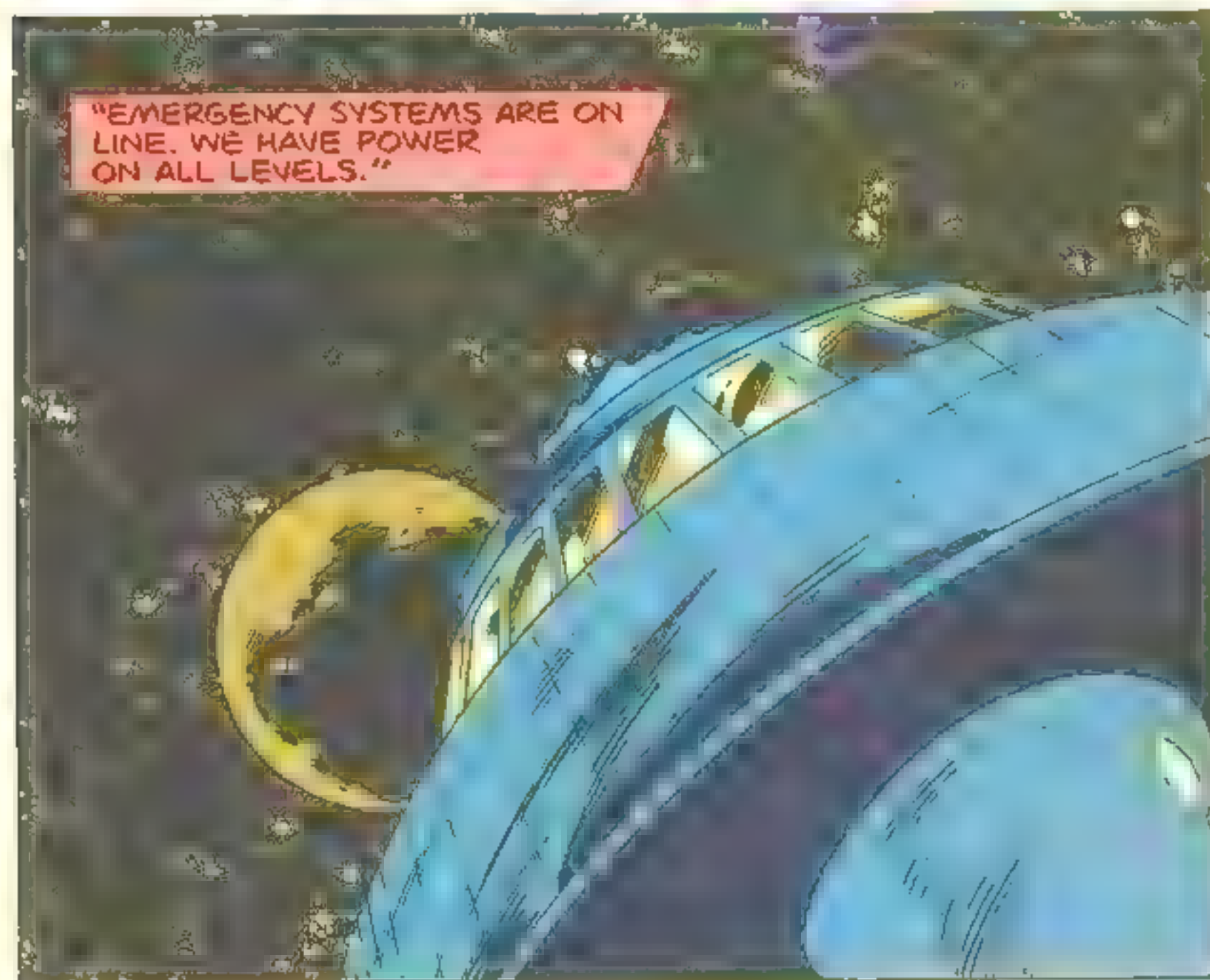
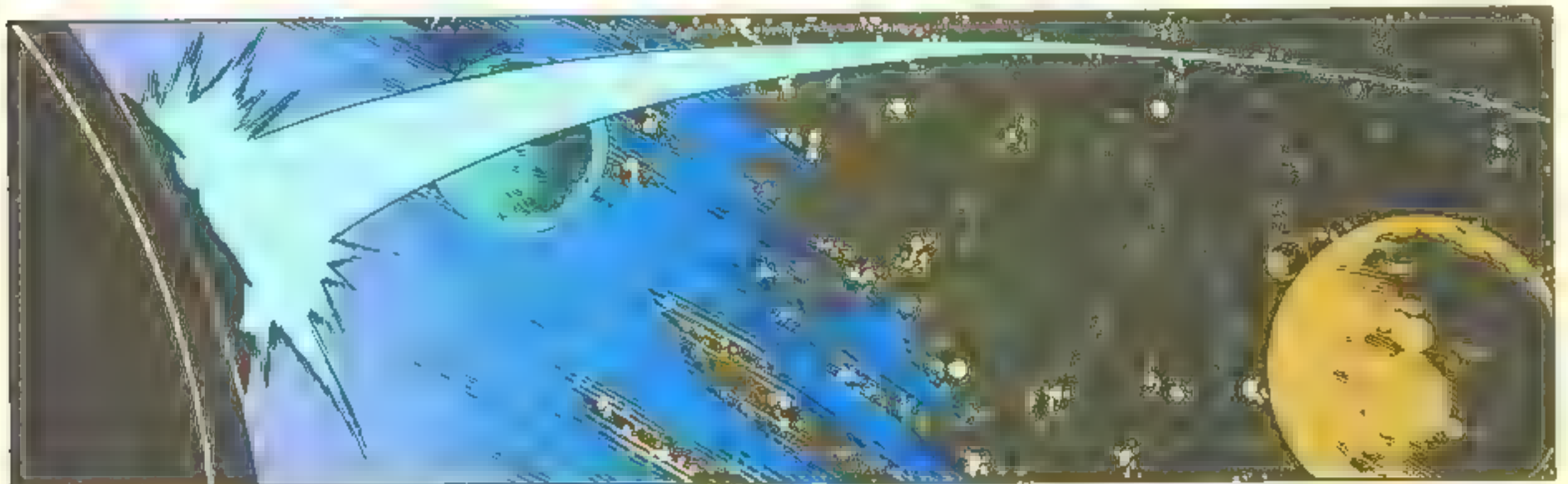
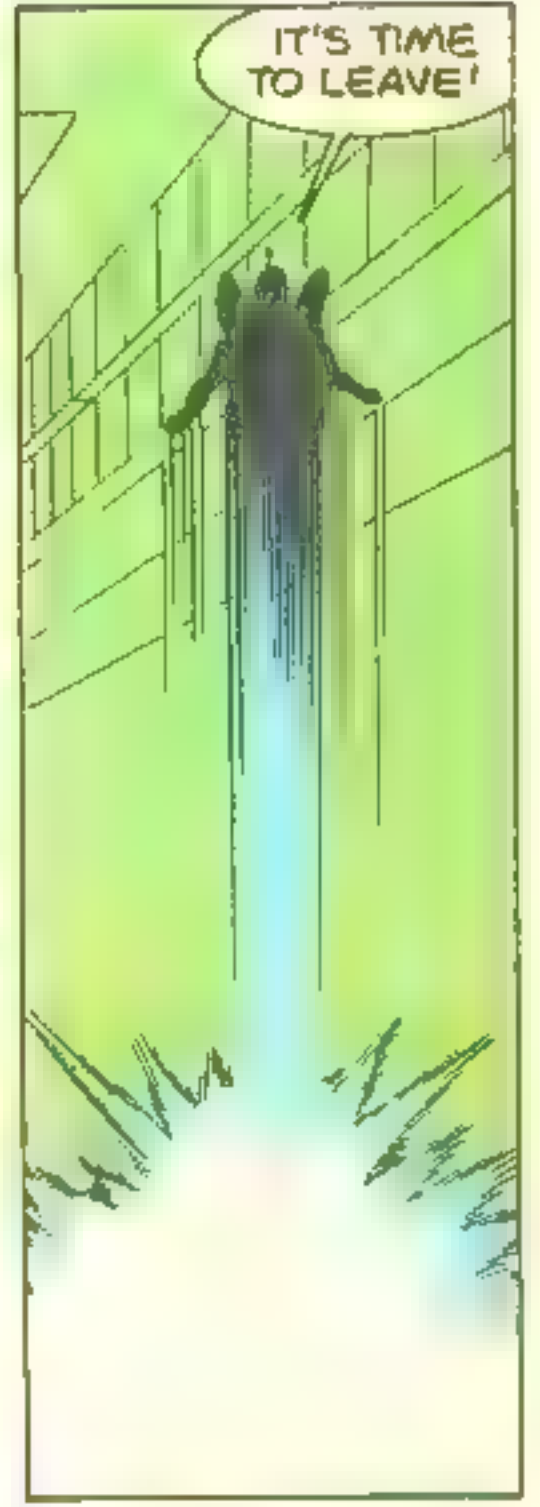
SKRAMBANGCKK!

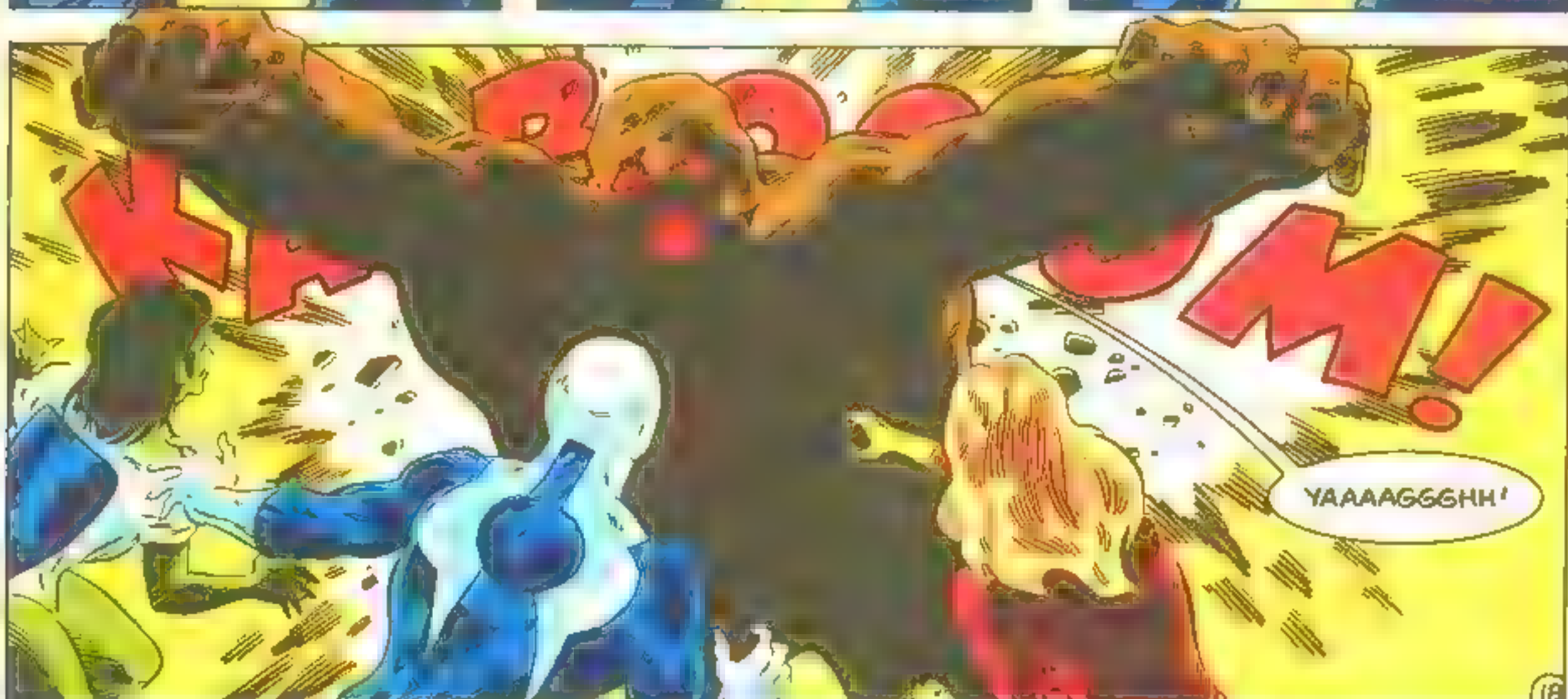
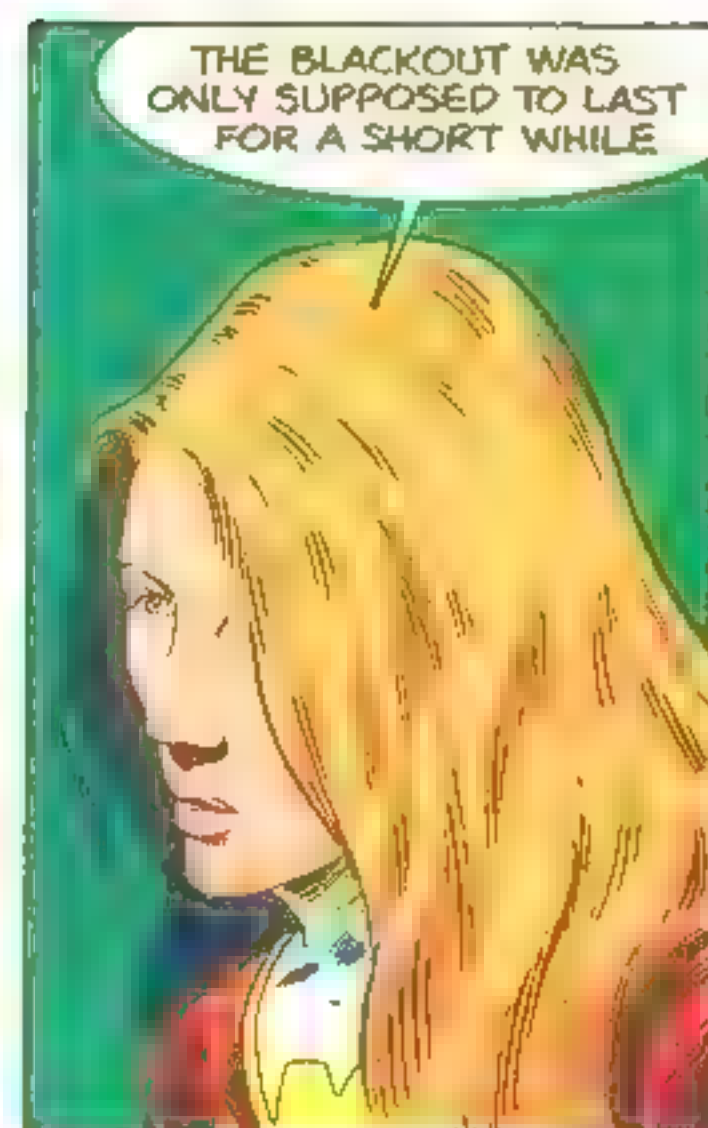


WARNING!
UNAUTHORIZED
ACCESS IN
DATANET.
TOP SECURITY
FILES
BREACHED.

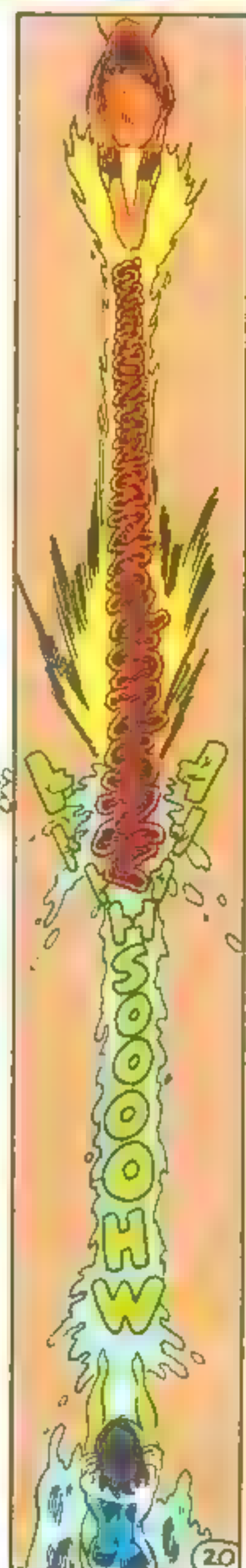
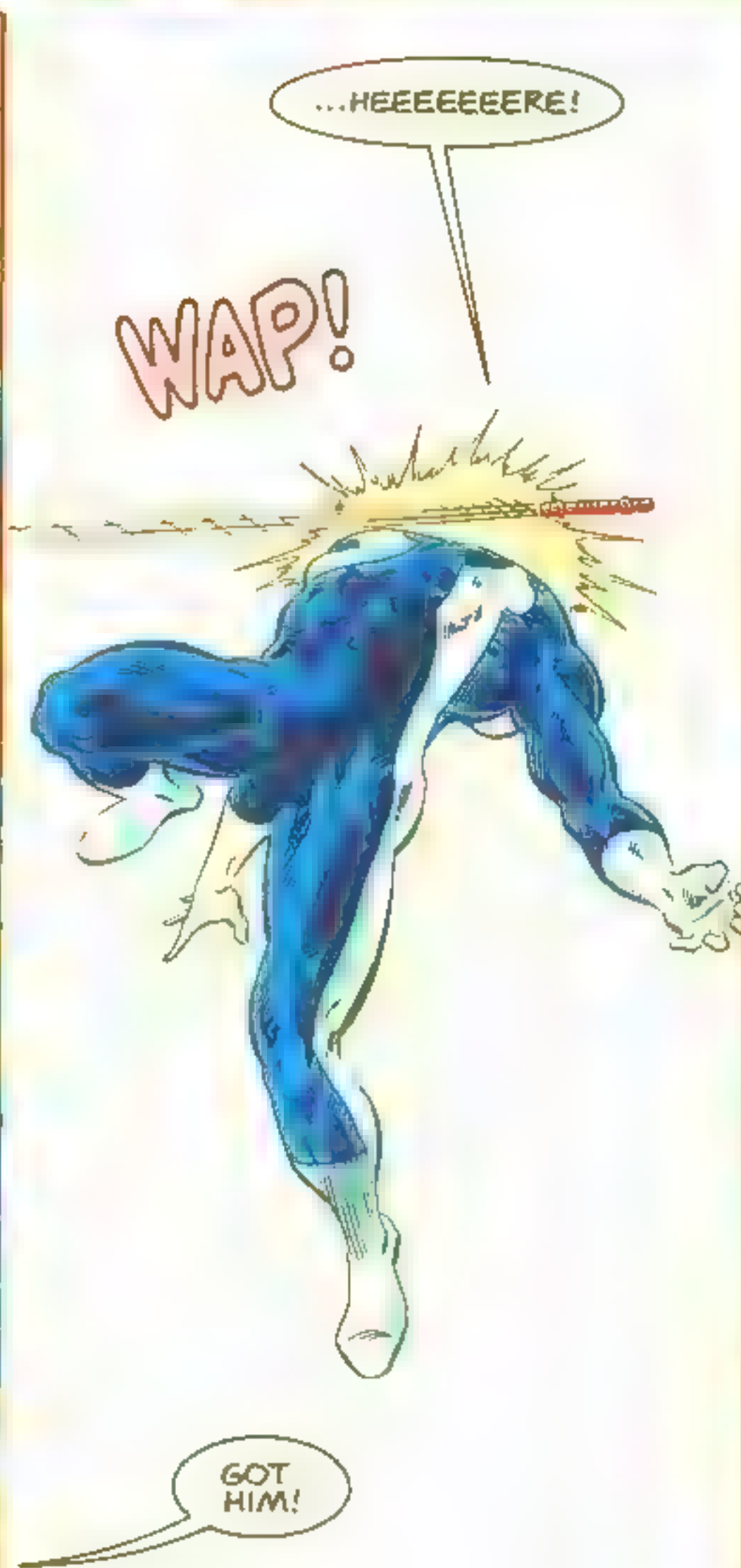
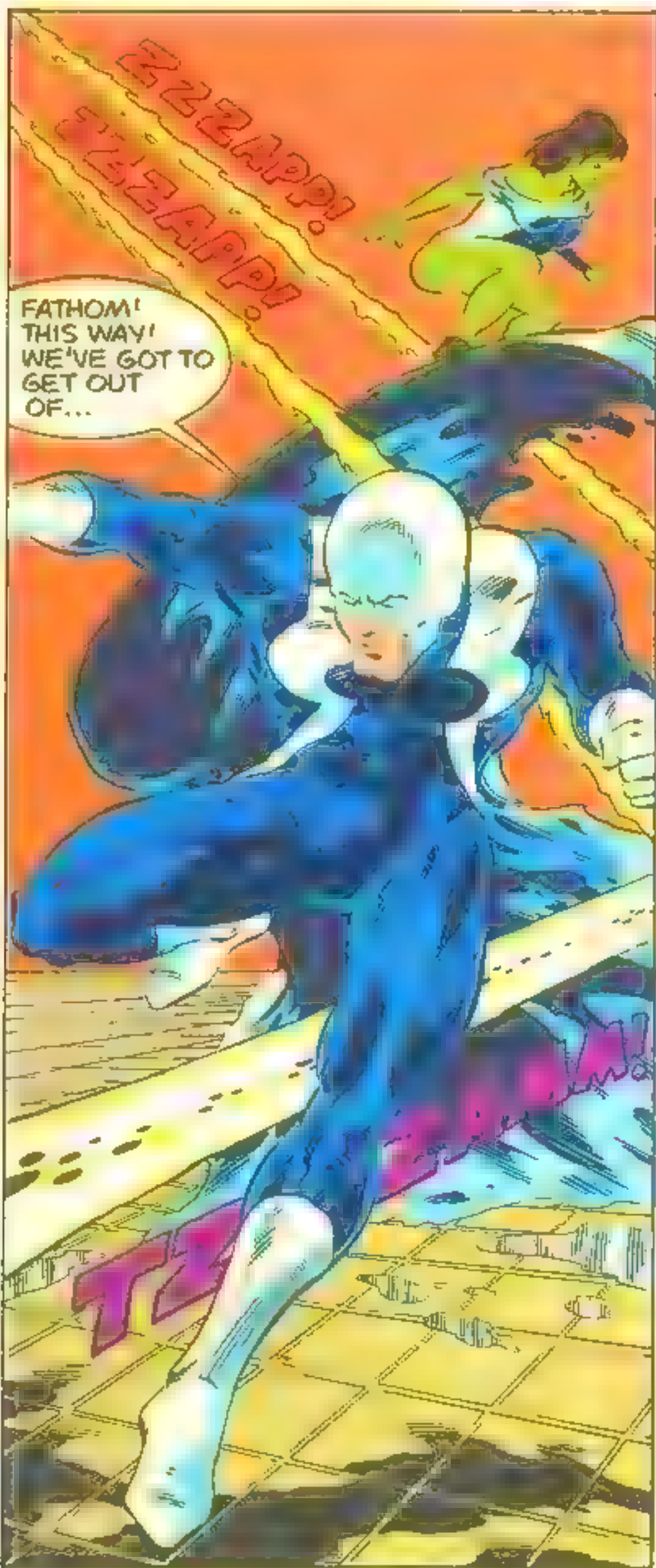
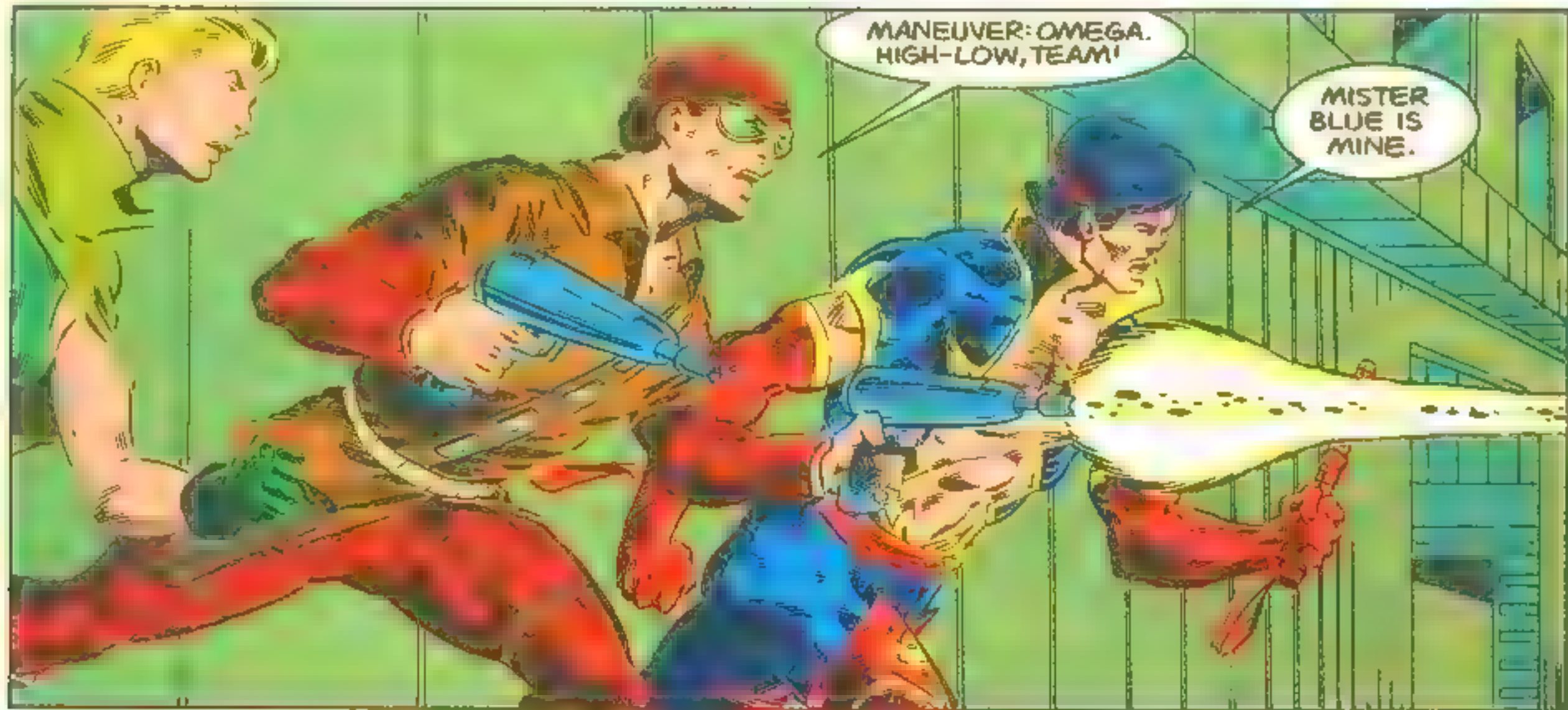
MY GOD!
DARKFORCE IS
INTO THE
COMPUTERS!
WITHOUT ANY
POWER, WE
HAVE NO
WAY TO
BLOCK HIM!
HE'S GETTING
ALL OF THE
MOST VITAL
SECRETS
OF THE
IMPERIUM!

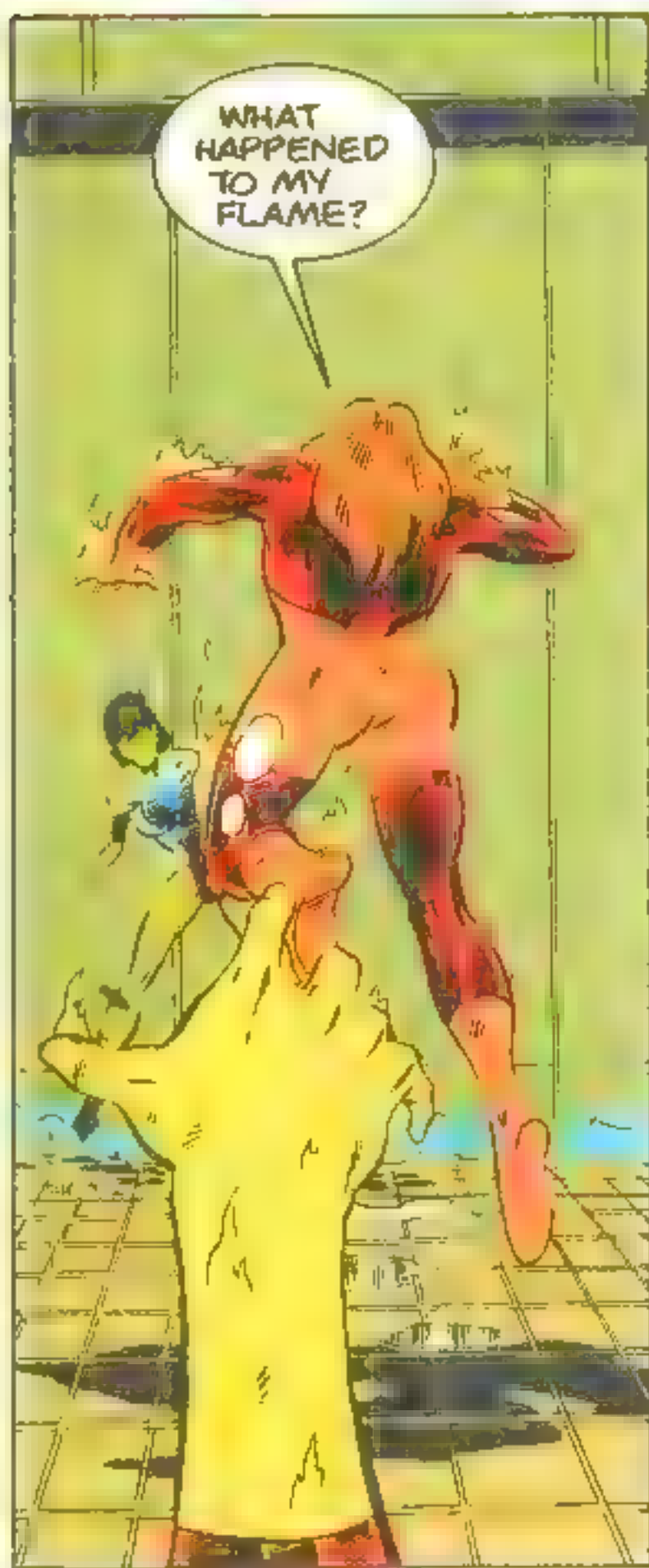
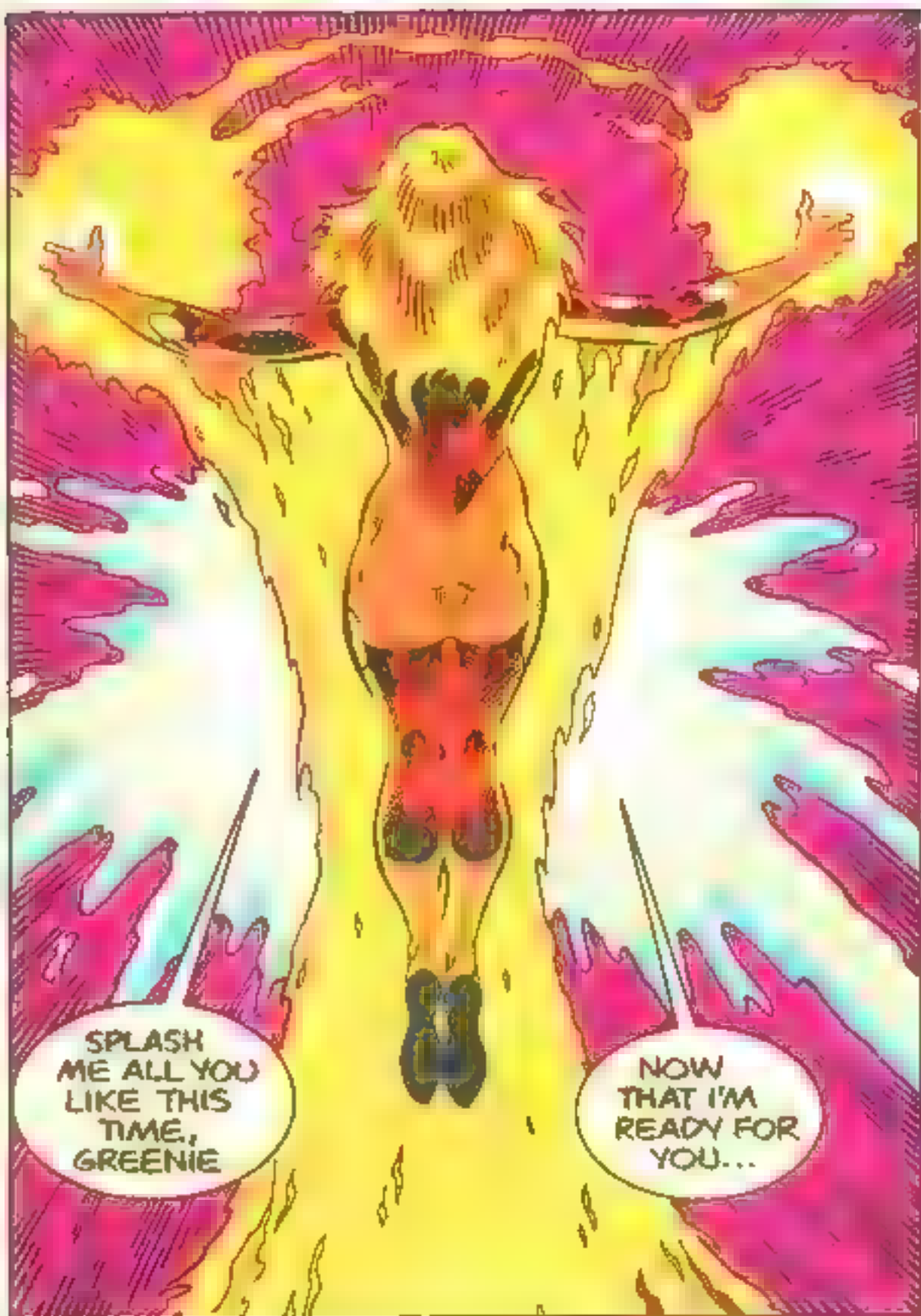


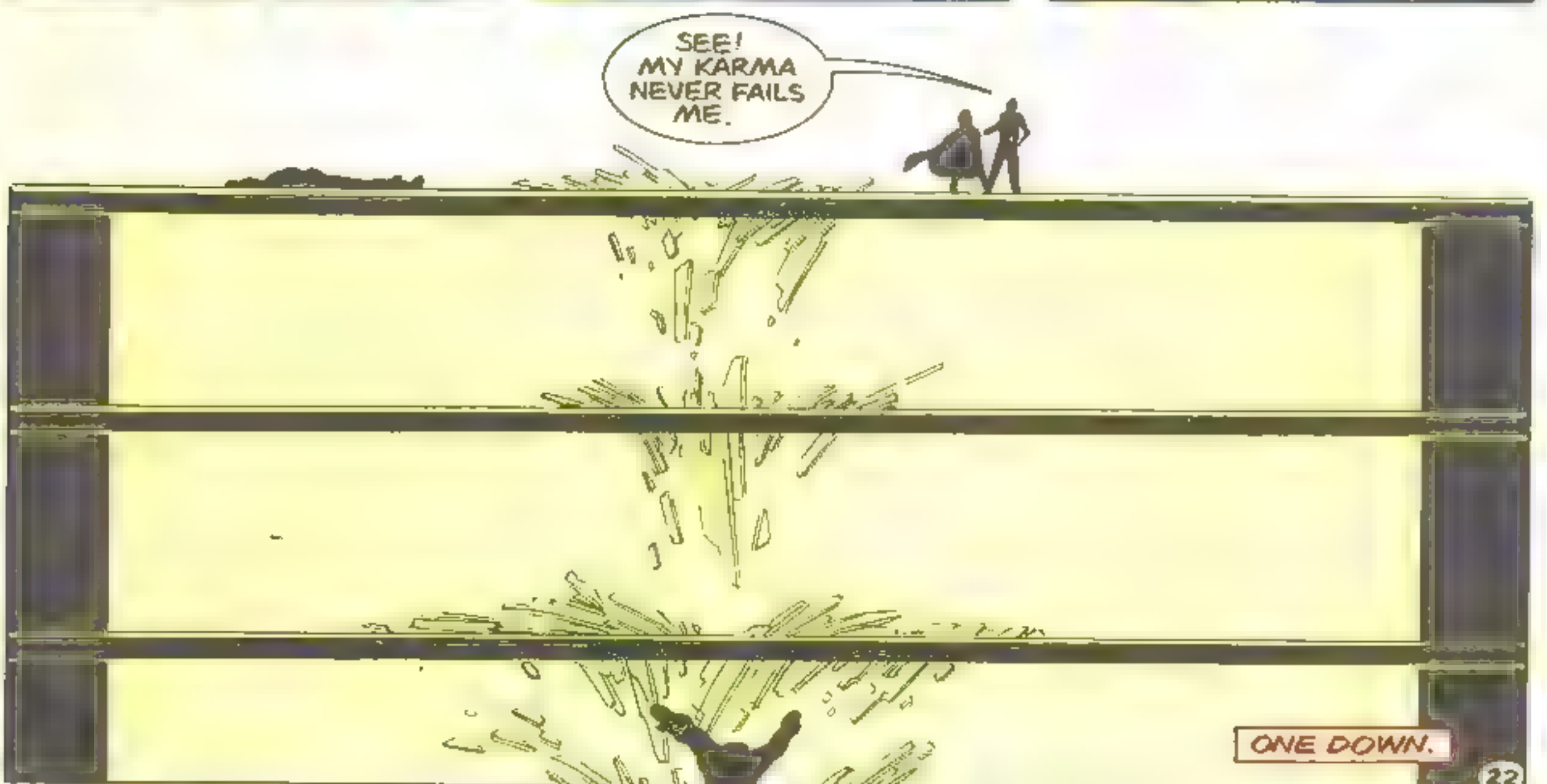


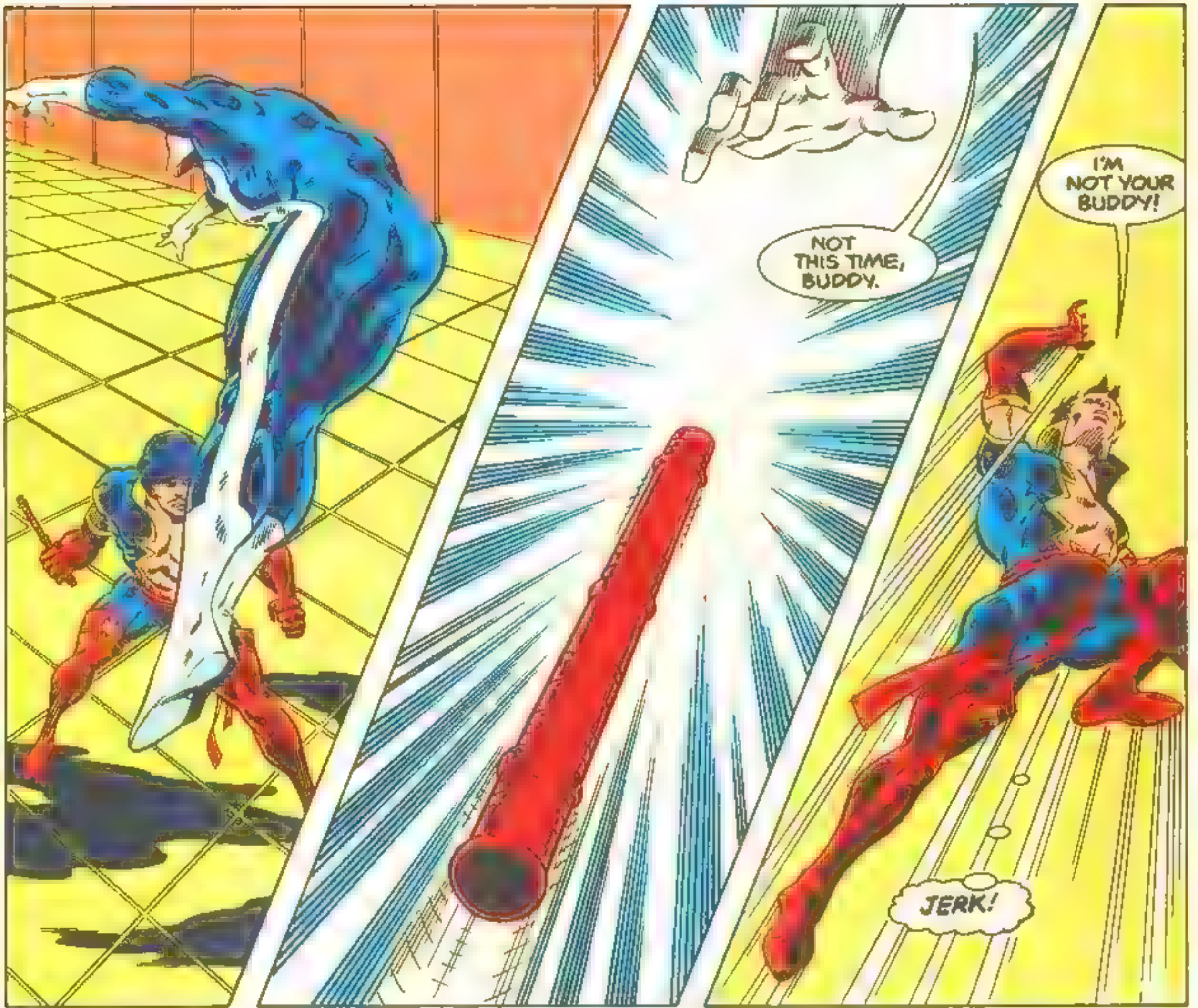








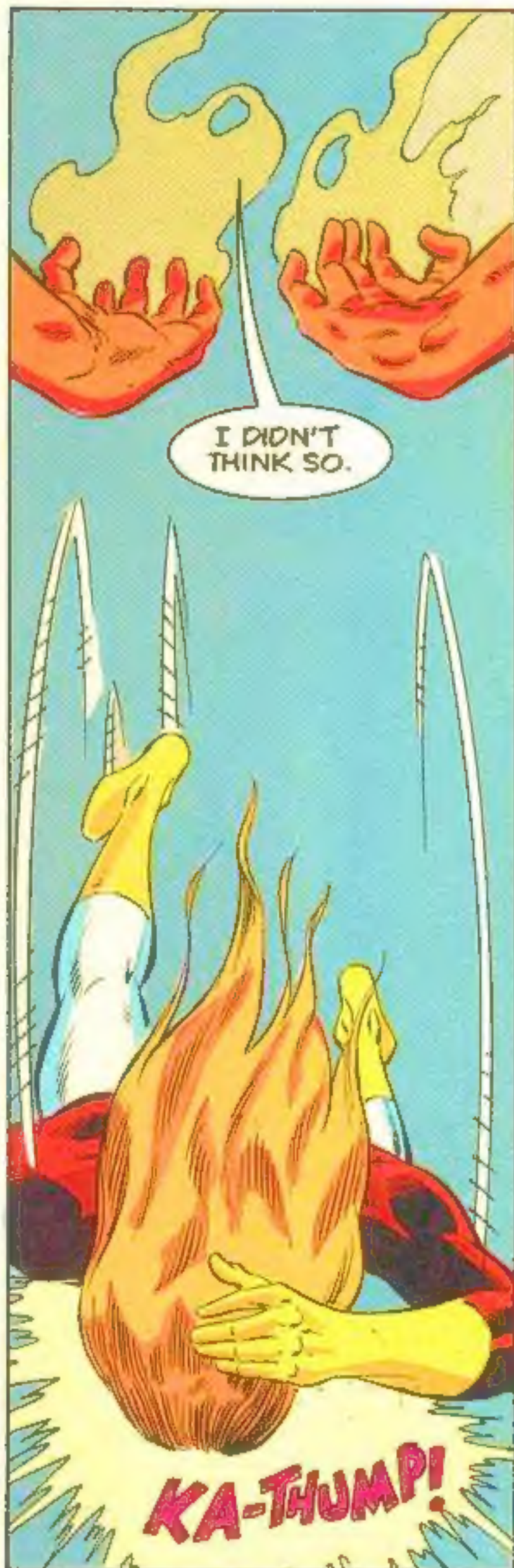


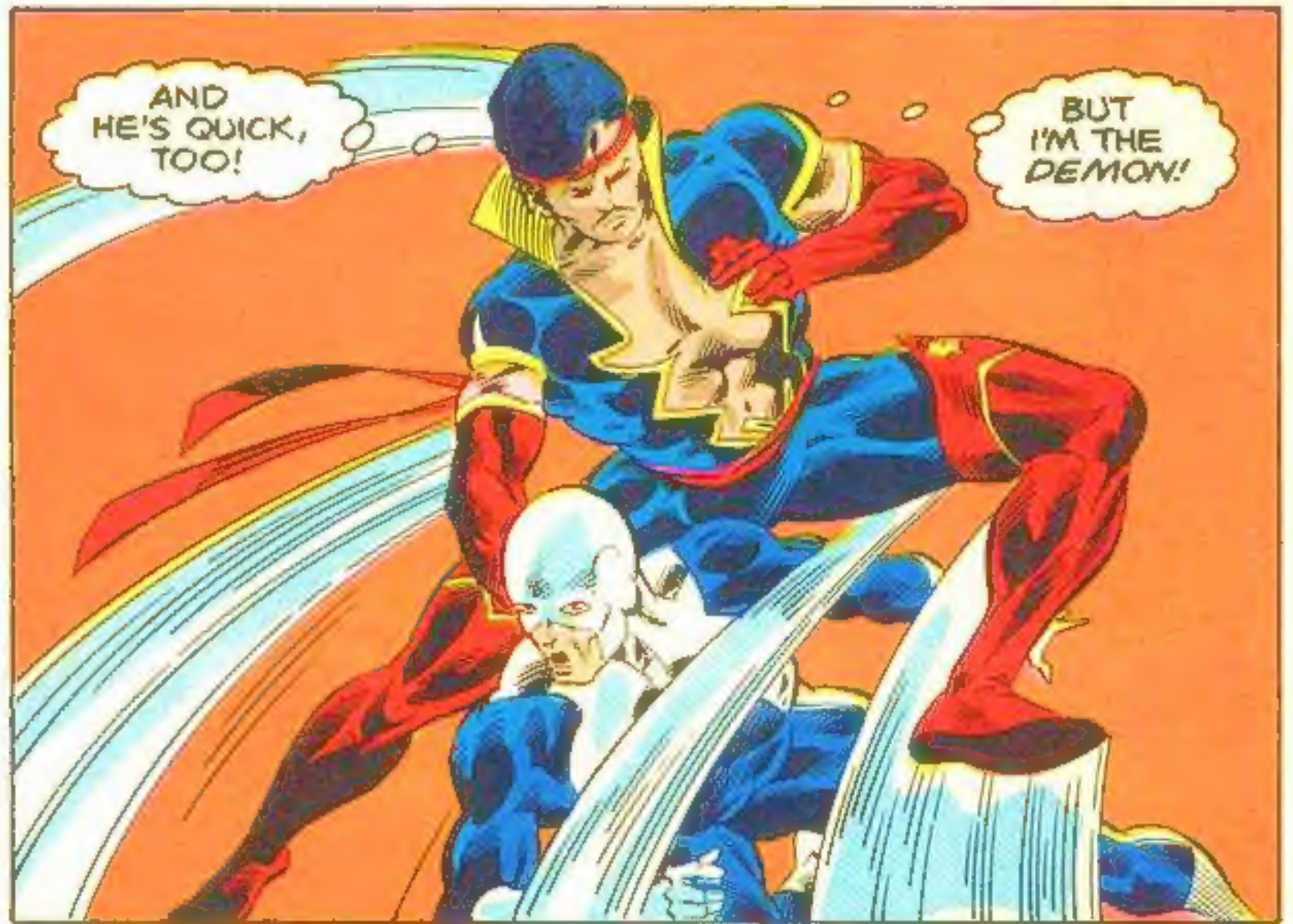


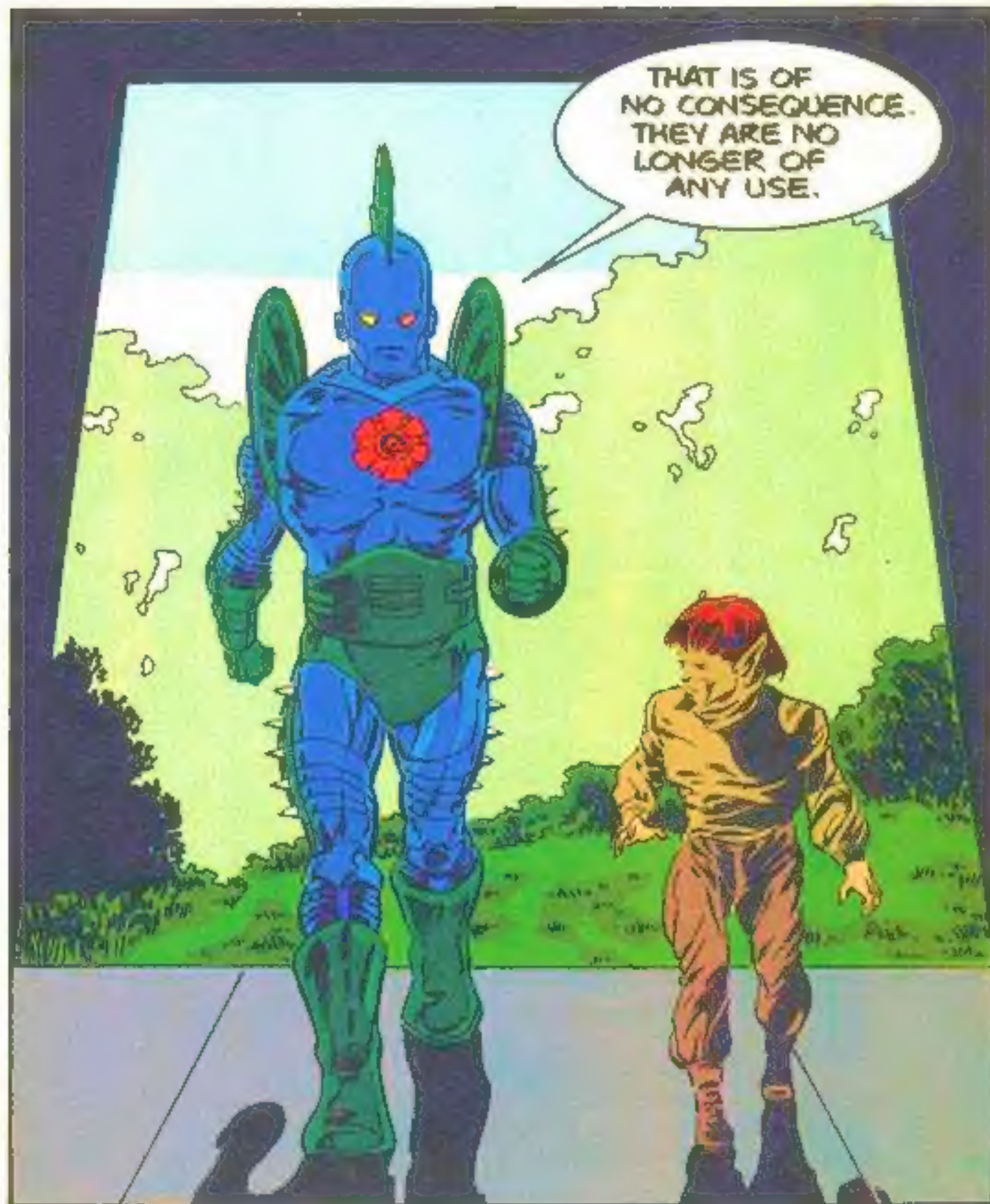
YOU ONLY ABSORBED
THE POWER MY SUIT HAD
FILTERING THROUGH IT
EARLIER--NOW, DARLING,
GET READY FOR A
MAXIMUM BLAST!

DO YOU
THINK YOU
CAN HANDLE
IT ALL?

AAAAAHHHGN!







LETTERS

OF THE LAW

• 1547 DeKALB ST. • NORRISTOWN, PA 19401 •

Prior to the release of JUSTICE MACHINE #1, we sent advance photocopies to some of comicdom's most prolific letter writers. The idea was to generate some feedback on Comico's revival of this popular super-team, not to mention getting some letters to print before the limited series ended. The response we got was exactly what we'd hoped for: lively and honest, insightful and intelligent, lucid and—well, why don't you read a few for yourself, and perhaps write us a letter of comment of your own?

And, speaking of comicdom's most prolific letter writer . . .

Dear Machiners (Machinists? Justices? People? Editor?),

Let me start off with the seemingly obligatory but nevertheless sincere offering of thanks for sending me the advance photocopy of JUSTICE MACHINE #1. I have this policy that concerns never refusing free gifts, and if that free gift is enjoyable, as this one was, then so much the better!

It seems almost in another era that I picked up a copy of JUSTICE MACHINE #1, from the gone-but-not-totally-forgotten Noble Comics, but it was actually only October of 1981—just a couple of months after Pacific Comics had broken open the comics market with Jack Kirby's CAPTAIN VICTORY #1 (gosh, doesn't Kirby's name just turn up everywhere in the history of comics?!), presaging the flood of independent/alternative comics to come. Alas, over the next two years, I was able to pick up only four more JM issues—the title failed to resurface after #5. Well, almost. There was the spectacle of the best/worst/first/last/only publication from Texas Comics that I own: JUSTICE MACHINE ANNUAL #1. That annual also saw the JM give a leg-up to a new team by featuring the Elementals in a back-up. Now, things have come full circle, as the popular Elementals are being used to give a boost to the "new-comers," the Justice Machine. (And things may have come full circle in another way. Secreted safely in the cryogenically-equipped Comico Storage Room here in my magnificent yet humble Fortress of Mapletude is issue #3 of the original JM, in which I was fortunate enough to have a letter printed. Now, by way of this photocopy, I have an opportunity to perhaps appear in a lettercol in this run of JM—maybe even in issue #3! Hey, forget whatever merits or quality this letter might have! Wouldn't it be worth it to print it just on sentimental reasons alone?! Well, wouldn't it?)

That long, rambling intro is just my way of saying that to me, the JUSTICE MACHINE isn't just another new super-hero team on the crowded comics mar-

ket. In my mind, they harken back to those days when the comics market really began to develop after not a few years of relative quietness. Though they never really had time to attain it, the JM spoke to me of the possibilities of doing a super-hero series with a distinctive twist. Now, having said all that, let's get down to a few comments on the story itself.

The world of Georwell was always one of the more fascinating potentials that the original JM displayed, but it was never fully exploited. I got the feeling that its true significance had not been fully thought out by the creative team—or perhaps simply that they hadn't devoted sufficient space in the mag to explore it. In the new JM #1, we are not really given anything more. We are thrown into the action, with only the JMers' and the Dark One's conflicting views on the nature of Georwell's government to guide us. Naturally, we tend to believe the JMers' contention that they represent goodness and purity, while we dismiss the Dark One's words as an attempt at self-justification by an evil tyrant. Reinforcing this view is that the Dark One appears to be in league with evil supernatural forces. Yet, one must be mindful of the fact that people sometimes ally themselves with unsavory factions in order to fight what they consider to be a greater or more immediate evil. And what is to say, really, that the JMers are right? Could the government of Georwell now, in fact, be evil? Could the JM have been corrupted itself or, more plausibly, hoodwinked? All of this may be idle speculation in the face of future events, but it does, I think, illustrate some of the possibilities that I always saw in the JM concept.

One character I find myself enjoying is Talisman. For a hero, he's rather seedy and unreliable. I think that it adds a bit of flavor to the proceedings. I mean, who says that everyone is suited for super-heroics? Also, the rather harsh reaction of one of his teammates was refreshing in that it demonstrates that things don't always have to be buddy-buddy. After all, winning sports teams aren't always harmonious operations (though they might be even *more* successful if they were!), so why shouldn't super-hero teams have a few rotten eggs (as opposed to personality conflicts between otherwise "okay" members)?

This issue was mostly slam-bang action, so I couldn't really get into the "meat" of the JM concept. But for now, it's enough to see them back, with another shot at success.

Yours truly,
"T.M. Maple"
Weston, Ontario, Canada

Dear Mark Burbey and Company,

Thanks ever so much for the sneak preview of your new title, JUSTICE MACHINE #1. It really was a neat surprise and one that I believe holds much promise for the future. You asked for my honest opinions, pro or con, so here they are.

Whenever commenting on any new title, I usually try to find the single key word that honestly sums up my feelings for that particular book. In the case of JUSTICE MACHINE, that word has got to be "potential." It's there on every page in every panel, the nucleus of so much drama, action, and down-and-out fun.

Now don't go flying off the handle and think I'm giving you a completely perfect score. Far from it. There are flaws here, equally in art and story. I don't like the close-up shots of the team members; they look like very bad movie glossies. On the other hand, Mike does get into the battle sequences with a real flair. His bodies in motion leap off the page rippling with energy.

Script-wise, I was impressed with Bill Willingham's conservative plotting. All too often he's totally confused me on his own ELEMENTALS saga, and it was nice to see him approach this action in a more lucid and entertaining manner. In fact, realizing that all of issue #1 is actually one huge set-up for the battle royal to come was terrific. As I came to the last page, I most definitely wanted to just keep going. Now that is indeed skillful writing.

The only weakness in the script lay in the lack of introduction to the JM. Having never read their original appearances, I was (and still am to a degree) totally in the dark as to each of their identities and abilities. Hopefully, this will be corrected soon in the series.

Finally, a word of prophecy. Since your preview copies have to be black-and-white by necessity, I found myself missing the rich, vibrant colors that will certainly accompany this book in its final release. Coloring and printing quality have been two of the earmarks your company is noted for, and I can easily predict that JM will be no exception in these departments.

Who needs another team book? Well, if it's full of colorful heroes, gut-tightening suspense, and all-out adventure. Then the answer is quite simple: we do, thank you.

Gratefully,
Ron Fortier
Somersworth, NH

—And thank you, guys, for all your keen observations and kind words. Stay tuned for more next issue.